

The Message of the Covenant

The Salvation of the Soul

and

The Things That Will Be Hereafter



*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit..
John 15:8*

THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL

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Introduction

This message is addressed to all born-again Christian believers who comprise today's Church.

This book, at least its subject matter, carries the possibility to the serious reader of saving him from surprise when the Lord comes, and from the tribulations which shall try the indifferent; as well as a passport to admit him to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and to the highest awards of eternity. Consider it carefully. Not all things are as you have been taught.

There is a huge body of truth that, for reasons later revealed in this discussion, has been lying almost totally buried in the whole of God's Word, the Bible. It is found in both testaments, Old and New. In the Old Testament, it is seen in shadows and types; but in the New Testament it is specifically revealed. It has for the most part been totally ignored, or at least, misunderstood, because it does not fit our own treasured doctrines. If your eyes can be opened to this truth, you may stand in amazement that you have gone so long in total ignorance of a vitally central doctrine which is taught openly on nearly every page of the New Testament. But as Scripture states:

John 10:10

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

This huge treasure of wisdom lies veiled, or hidden in the gospel: not because the Lord wills it so, but because men prefer their own doctrines, and because the "god of this world hath blinded their eyes". Satan is only too happy to promote the doctrines of men (called "leaven" in Scripture), since he knows this will ultimately cause the believer untold grief. Since he cannot snatch believers out of the Father's hand, he at least gets great satisfaction in destroying their lives and rendering them unqualified to receive rewards.

This doctrine, The Salvation of the Soul (also called in Scripture the "Gospel of the Glory of Christ" and the "Word of the Kingdom") is today almost totally unknown in the Body of Christ, and this is to the utter detriment of the hearers of today's false teachings. Detriment is perhaps too mild a word to use, since the false teachings being perpetrated on today's gullible sheep (who all too often fail to read the Bible for themselves) will result in horrendous loss to themselves personally, not only in the coming 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ, but also throughout the eternal ages to come.

I cannot stress too heavily that every Christian brother and sister reading these pages should consider what the Spirit is saying to the Church in these end times. Without reservation, I can state that this message stands apart as the most vital of any you may have heard in your Christian lifetime - second only to the first call each of you heard to *"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"*. This is not a message to the lost world - this is a cry from the heart of God to all who have been born again from above and who hope for the glory of the Lord's soon-coming Kingdom.

I am well aware that what I have written is in direct opposition to much of the teaching that is current both in religious literature and in the representative pulpits of the land. I freely grant that the underlying postulate of the Sovereignty of God with all its corollaries is at direct variance with the opinions and thoughts of the natural man, but the truth is, as fallen men we are quite *unable* to think upon these matters: we are *incompetent* for forming a proper estimate of God's character and ways, and it is because

of this that God has given us a revelation of *His* mind, and in that revelation He plainly declares, "*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isa. 55:8-9).

In view of this Scripture, it is only to be expected that much of the contents of the Bible conflicts with the sentiments of the carnal mind, which is *enmity* against God. My appeal then is not to the popular beliefs of the day, nor to the creeds of the churches, but to the Law and Testimony of Jehovah. All that I ask for is an impartial and attentive examination of what I have written, and that made prayerfully in the light of the Lamp of Truth. May the reader heed the Divine admonition to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

We must remember that we, the whole Body of Christ, today live in a time that most Bible commentators, in spite of a multitude of other differences, will usually agree can be designated as the time of the Laodicean Church – the Church which the Lord stated in rather emphatic and startling language that He will "vomit out of His mouth" at some point in the future. How can any Christian brother or sister hear those words and not wonder to whom the Lord is speaking?

Surely, not my Church: for, "*Lord, Lord, have we not done many wonderful works in thy name?*" Or, "Lord, You must have had in mind those Methodists down the street, or perhaps those 'faith teachers' up in Tulsa and Fort Worth. Surely I am not in that group? So maybe it's even those in England, or Germany, or some other country. Not us; no way!"

There is a beautiful old hymn I am sure most of you are familiar with, the chorus of which goes like this:

"It is well, it is well, with my soul".

I, too, rejoice in the comfort that this beautiful old song brings. But I also see written in Scripture:

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.

Let me suggest to you that it is very possible that it is certainly not well - especially with your souls. Because one of the most important doctrines in the Bible has been almost totally ignored - and that is, the doctrine of the Salvation of the Soul. To our own peril, we in the Body of Christ have long held to *this* doctrine of men instead:

"Anything good in the Bible must be for Christians, and anything bad in the Bible must be for unbelievers".

For lack of a better term, I (and others before me) call this the "doctrine of greasy grace". It is surely a false doctrine, for God is not only a God of Grace (for which I am eternally grateful; for we are all saved by grace through faith), but He is also a God of Righteousness. He will render a "just recompense of reward"; and He will render to every man according as he has done, whether good or bad, for surely it is also written,

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

And it is written,

Hebrews 10:30

For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

Too long has the Church of today rejoiced in an improper interpretation of Romans 8:1 which states, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" They blithely believe that because of this verse, a Christian may go on his merry way, and live his life as he or she chooses, with no consequences of such a walk, because after the Judgment Seat of Christ, won't we all be equal in Heaven except perhaps for a few more or less jewels on our crowns? The answer is a resounding: Absolutely Not! This is the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication (Rev. 2:14).

And those who ignore the clear teachings of the Holy Spirit otherwise do so totally oblivious of their own impending disaster – an awesome event where there shall be much weeping and gnashing of teeth among born-again Christians.

It is my hope that I can teach this truth in love; perhaps some will hear, and repent. This is not a message to the lost – this is to God's own people. Those few that do hear this message, and repent, and purposely strive to do the Lord's will, will be blessed. It is not too late. I feel in my heart an urgency to repeat this vitally important warning:

Matthew 4:17

Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

I gratefully acknowledge that I am standing on the shoulders of a few giants of the faith who have gone before me. I humbly acknowledge that much of what I have learned from the Holy Spirit has already been written by a few who dared, and I have drawn heavily and without reservation from their labors. I don't think it is necessary that I should "reinvent the wheel"; i.e., that I should invest more time in that which has already been written by others who also saw these truths long before I did. I also admit that some have already said it in clear words that need no improvement. So I will present some of the teachings in this book in words they have already used. However, at times I will carry the doctrine even deeper than they have, and perhaps to different conclusions.

I have no pride of authorship in this book, and nowhere does my name appear as author. Some of the writing is mine; some came from others. Where others said it well, I used their writings verbatim; however, at times I changed their writings where I thought they were in error. I do not believe that God honors copyright laws as concerns His truth; His truth is higher than man's laws. This book is not copyrighted, and all should feel free to use any part of it as they will – I freely received it, and I freely give it. As concerns this book, the Lord has laid on my heart:

John 4:38

I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

Because I firmly believe that this is the last generation before the coming of the Lord, I believe the Lord is emphasizing these truths to those who are facing His now imminent return, and the Kingdom of Heaven He will then establish; and in His infinite wisdom He knows some will hear, and repent before it is too late.

Many hold to the doctrine that the Kingdom of Heaven is already here, and that it exists only in the hearts of saved men. While this is true in *some* sense, I pray you would not just stop there. There is more; I pray you would not miss the *whole* truth of the Word of God. The whole truth is that there is not only a present Kingdom of Heaven which we as Christians presently experience, but also there is the Kingdom of Heaven which is *coming* - the millennial reign of Christ. It is vital that a believer rightly divide the Word of God, and determine by context to which period the Scripture you read is referring.

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

I pray that God would peradventure grant you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; I pray the Holy Spirit may awaken some of you, that you may repent and not only begin doing the will of God, but also do it through His power and Spirit, rather than through the efforts of your own labors. It's no wonder that so many offer their own sacrifices to God; did not Cain do just that in the very beginning?

I humbly beseech you to lay down the doctrines of men, and to consider the truth of God's Word that I have presented in the following pages. Much of what I have written may offend your sacred cows - for that I offer no apology. You must not come to the Word of God and interpret it in accordance with your own preconceived notions - for if you do, you will surely continue in error. I pray you will allow the Holy Spirit to attest to the Truth, and that you will set aside your initial reaction to views that may offend your cherished traditions. For it may be even as our Lord stated to the Pharisees, "*Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*" (Matt. 15:6)

Of course, I do not make any claim that the teachings and interpretations I present before you are infallible. But I do believe that the overall doctrine is sound, and is supported with Scripture in every detail. Such supporting Scripture is hopefully presented without any need to "stretch" it to make it fit. Furthermore, the doctrines presented here are coherent – they fit together without conflict with Scripture as a whole. It is with these hopes in mind that I offer, "*come, let us reason together*" in the awesome truth of God's precious Word. It is your future that is at stake.

CHAPTER ONE

The Christian's Future

This book tells about the eternal future awaiting each Christian. It reveals the truths that surround the Judgment Seat of Christ, and teaches one how to live his or her life in accordance with Biblical principles in order to qualify to rule and reign with Christ in His coming kingdom.

Contrary to the teachings of the past several centuries by the Church as a whole, our born-again experience of salvation is *not* the all-encompassing and central event of our lifetimes, but is only the very *beginning* of the Christian racecourse. The *end* will occur at the Judgment Seat of Christ, where the words and actions and motives of every believer will be revealed and judged. The Bible gives us a preview of that day when God will judge each believer on *how he or she ran that race*.

The Judgment Seat of Christ mentioned here will take place somewhere in the heavens above the earth immediately after the rapture of the believer. Rapture is a future event that is described in Scripture as the catching away of believers from this world. According to 1Thess. 4:15-17, all believers who have died in Jesus Christ will be raised at some future point in time. Then, immediately after this raising, all believers who are alive and remain will be translated, and together with these raised ones will meet the Lord in the air.

At this great event believers will move into the heavens to the place called the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is here that each individual believer will have his life reviewed and judged before the Lord Jesus Himself. The results of that judgment will either be the receiving of rewards or the suffering of loss. So far this doctrine is probably very familiar to you. But now comes a great difference - contrary to the teaching of most popular Bible teachers today, not all born-again believers will rule and reign with Christ when He returns to establish His kingdom. This "ruling and reigning" is a *reward* given only to those who qualify.

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S VIEW OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

According to this passage of Scripture, every Christian will have the same foundation at the Judgment Seat, which is Jesus Christ (Verse 11). This speaks of the finished work of Christ on the cross, and reveals that everyone present at this event is already saved (i.e., born-again).

Since everyone who appears at the Judgment Seat is already saved, then the purpose of this judgment will be to judge the quality of the materials the believer used to build his life after he was saved. These materials may be gold, silver and precious stones or wood, hay and stubble. These describe either good or

bad works produced by the believer during his walk on earth before he died, or, in the case of some, before he was raptured.

A Just Recompense of Reward

A companion Scripture shown below states that:

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

This informs us that every Christian must appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ to be judged according to the things he has done in his body, whether they were good or bad. By taking the truths of both of these passages, we understand that God will test the works of every Christian in that day. This test will be conducted through fire (a baptism of fire). All who have produced works that are not consumed by this fire (gold, silver, precious stones) will receive a reward. On the other hand, all who have produced works that are totally consumed (wood, hay, stubble) will suffer loss. These tests will be held in the strictest sense, revealing every man's works, thoughts, and motives *after* he was saved. The results of this fiery test will be a "*just recompense of reward*" (Heb. 2:2), which means that every man will receive exactly what he earned.

It is at this point that each believer will reap either *corruption (loss)* or *everlasting life* ("life for the age" – this concept will be explored fully later in this writing.)

Galatians 6:8

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Before I leave this passage of Scripture, I would draw your attention to verse 15 that describes those who will "suffer loss". Please notice that after this fiery judgment - even though they may suffer loss - they will still be saved (Gr. 'future passive'). This is because of the foundation of Christ's finished work on the Cross. Therefore, that which is described as "*suffering loss*" cannot refer to the loss of their ultimate salvation in the eternal ages to come. Please note carefully that the term "shall be saved" is in the *future* tense.

A SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLE

It is interesting to note how many individuals, denominations and sects in these last days teach that believers can lose their salvation. However, those that reason as such do so from spiritual ignorance, not understanding the doctrine of *rewards*. Because you are about to enter into the pages of this book to learn about this great continent of truth, I will first set forth the following scriptural principles that remain true throughout the Bible:

Wherever you may read in the Bible of something that is given on the basis of *grace through faith - without works* -, that something is the *gift* of salvation and cannot be lost.

Conversely, wherever you may read of something that is given on the basis of *works* (and is accordingly not free), that something is a *prize* or a *reward*, and it can be lost.

Whenever a person teaches and preaches the Word without considering these two great truths, he may mix the two (gift and reward) and produce error. Such a person has failed to *rightly divide* the Word of God. This failure to rightly divide the Word of God is the reason some preach the error of salvation by works, while others preach the error that Christians can lose their salvation.

In the chapters to follow, I will attempt (1) to show you in Scripture the meaning of the "building materials of our lives", and (2) to show some of the pertinent truths from God's Word concerning the great rewards that may be given or the great losses that may be suffered.

CHAPTER TWO

Salvation of the Soul

The Judgment Seat of Christ

The judgment seat of Christ will concern one issue alone – a man's actions following his salvation. That which will come under review in that day will be "works" emanating out of either *faithfulness* or *unfaithfulness* — works comparable to "*gold, silver, precious stones*," or works comparable to "*wood, hay, stubble*" (1 Corinthians 3:12, 13).

Nothing pertaining to man's eternal salvation (that being based *entirely* upon that which Christ has done) can come into view at this judgment, for God has already judged sin in the person of His Son at Calvary. And God is satisfied with His Son's finished work.

In this respect, all judgment relative to eternal salvation is *past* and *can never again* be brought up as an issue. "He who believes in Him [Christ] is not condemned [Greek: *krino*; lit., 'is not judged,' i.e., the one who has believed on Christ *can never* be brought into judgment at any future time (for judgment has already occurred in past time)]" (John 3:18a quoted below).

And this is what bothers some Christians about thoughts surrounding the judgment seat of Christ. Scriptures such as John 3:18 clearly state that *no Christian can ever be brought into judgment*. Yet, Scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 5:10 — "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ . . .*" - also clearly state that *judgment awaits all Christians*.

This can become quite confusing unless one recognizes that *two entirely different matters are being dealt with*. One has to do with God's judgment upon sin, based upon His Son's finished work at Calvary, *with eternal salvation in view*. And the other has to do with God's subsequent judgment upon His household servants relative to their faithfulness or unfaithfulness as servants in the Lord's house, *with the Messianic Era in view*.

The former judgment - a past judgment upon sin, based on the Son's finished work at Calvary - in actuality, has to do *not only with saved man but with unsaved man as well*.

Note the complete verse in John:

John 3:18

He who believes in Him is not condemned [is not judged]: but he who does not believe is condemned already [has already been judged (a perfect tense in the Greek text, referring to a judgment that occurred in past time — a judgment no longer occurring during present time, for the matter has been finished)], because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Judgment for the sin question (sin brought into existence by and through Adam's fall in Genesis chapter three) has already occurred. It occurred in past time *for both the saved and the unsaved* — for the saved, *with respect to belief*; for the unsaved, *with respect to unbelief*.

For the former (the saved), they have been judged in past time, through a Substitute. *They have believed*, and a Substitute (Christ) has paid sin's penalty (death) on their behalf.

For the latter (the unsaved), they have been judged in past time as well, but apart from a Substitute. *They have not believed*, and there, consequently, is no Substitute to pay sin's penalty (death) on their behalf. They will have to pay the penalty themselves. Judgment itself has already occurred, but the payment for sin's penalty awaits a future date.

And, at any future judgment — whether a judgment of the saved or a judgment of the unsaved (all are to be judged at times in the future, in separate judgments) — the issue of the sin question and eternal salvation or eternal damnation *can never resurface*. Once an individual, at death, moves beyond this life — beyond the point where he can either believe or not believe, whether he is saved or unsaved — it is a finished matter; his eternal salvation is sealed; he has already been judged in this respect, for it is all inseparably connected with Christ's past finished work on the cross and God's past judgment relative to this finished work.

This is the reason that any future judgment of man, whether saved or unsaved, is always seen to be on the basis of *the works of the individual being judged* — works emanating out of faithfulness (one class of the saved), out of unfaithfulness (another class of the saved), or out of no faith (the unsaved).

For a judgment of the saved with respect to *works*, refer to 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; for a judgment of the unsaved with respect to *works*, refer to Revelation. 20:11-15.

1 Corinthians 3:13

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Revelation 20:12

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

But, calling attention to things surrounding *the saved alone*, the difference between past and future judgments could be compared to the distance between the east and the west. It is only because of the former (God's past judgment relative to the sin question, based entirely on Christ's finished work) that the latter can occur (judgment on the basis of works emanating out of faithfulness or unfaithfulness); and the latter can have nothing to do with the former in the sense of nullifying, adding to, taking from, etc.

The two are completely separate in this respect. Once a person has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ — has passed "*from death to life*" — that individual comes into a relationship with God that heretofore did not exist in his life. He becomes *a new creation "in Christ,"* part of the family of God; and he then finds himself among household servants who are being dealt with accordingly.

Following an individual believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, God deals with that individual on an entirely different plane — as a household servant, with a view to the Messianic Era lying out ahead. The individual is never again dealt with (during present or future time, or at a future judgment) on the basis of that which is past — Christ's finished work, effecting his eternal salvation.

Everything having to do with God's judgment in this respect is *past*. The person *has already been judged* (via God's judgment upon a Substitute, upon His Son at Calvary, who paid the penalty for sin on the person's behalf).

And this fact alone should put to rest any thought that saved man could ever one day become unsaved, or lost, again. How could he? Such would be impossible, for God never deals with saved man on this basis (and this would be aside from the fact that man's salvation is not based on anything that he has done to begin with, but on that which Christ alone has done).

But that which numerous Christians fail to recognize is the fact that they are directly responsible, as household servants, to the One who sent His Son to die in their stead. And, as household servants, they will one day stand before their Savior (to whom God has committed all judgment) to give an account as to whether they have been faithful or unfaithful in the Lord's house.

The judgment seat of Christ will be concerned with this realm alone, and decisions and determinations emanating from findings at the judgment seat will result in one of either two things:

1) *Reward on the one hand.*

2) *Loss on the other hand.*

And both will have to do with *the Messianic Era*, not with eternal life.

And within both there will be a just reward [KJV: recompense] (Hebrews 2:2; 11:26) — receiving exactly what an individual deserves, receiving wages exactly commensurate with the person's faithfulness or unfaithfulness as a servant in the Lord's house (cf. Luke 12:42-46).

The Issue of Salvation of the Soul

Many Christians are taught soon after their own salvation about the truths of the Cross of Christ (please allow me to generalize):

That they are saved by grace, and that this is the main thing – that this life has its rough points and trials, but if we just hang in there, in time we will die or be raptured, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Then we will all be together in heaven, and a glorious time will be had by all. Some Churches teach that you need to do these programs (that we, your brothers and sisters in your Church, have decided upon), and God will be so pleased that He will reward you abundantly. Sing in the choir; tithe; be an usher; tell some poor lost soul about Jesus (perhaps in the ghetto when groups of us go there once a year); be a member of our Church; be faithful to be here (unless, of course, the Super Bowl is on); help us build a new building; be excited about God when we get together, and so on; and God will bless you, and make you to have a life full of abundant provision. Since we are saved by grace, just pray, read your Bible, and come fellowship with us; God is pleased with you and your efforts to serve Him. In the meantime, we should all be prosperous, and go about the business of enjoying this abundant life that God has so graciously provided us.

If this sounds a bit cynical, it was intentional in order to make a point. At least this seems to be the prevailing Christian philosophy taught in much of the world, and especially in the United States.

Many Bible schools, churches, preachers, evangelists, ministries, and missionaries seem to believe that the time of the church we are currently living in is the best ever. The Gospel is going out to the world through television, regular and shortwave radio, missionaries, Internet, and by other means. The Gospel has been published in most languages of the world. Yet, the Bible proclaims clearly that (with exceptions) the present condition of the church is the worst it has ever been.

But then God's Word also tells us that the wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked Laodicean church of today *does not know these things*. In other words, the churches of today believe they are just the opposite of their true condition. They believe they are the best, yet in reality they are the worst. Some churches and ministries proclaim they have won tens of thousands, or even millions of people to Christ. However, when the people they claim to have won are examined more thoroughly, there is often no evidence that the person truly repented. There is no evidence that Jesus is their Lord and Savior. There is no evidence they are obeying God's Word or are following the Jesus of the Bible. Both their conversation and actions are centered on this world – instead of on Jesus and the world to come.

For the most part, the salvation message of this generation is that all you need to do is to simply say a prayer. Once that prayer has been uttered, the person is eternally saved no matter what he may or may not do subsequently. The message of true repentance, true trust in Jesus Christ, forsaking everything, persecutions, God's wrath, hell and the lake of fire, sin, the Revelation and Daniel, Bible prophecy, and good sound Bible doctrine is seldom heard in today's churches. Much of today's churches are storytelling, fun-filled, prosperity-seeking institutions that hear of God's love, but despise biblical correction and get angry if it comes forth.

Like an adulterous wife, the western church preaches the gospel of hedonism, the doctrine that pleasure and happiness is the highest good. This is a gospel that says in effect, "Get saved and God will bless you, then He will give everything you have always wanted." Converts to this gospel make God a fine add-on to their hedonistic lifestyle; He becomes nothing more than an errand-boy they have added to their entourage of servants, feeding the desires of their flesh. This evil is manifest in a materialistic religion where God is like the great cornucopia in the sky. God also becomes the heavenly entertainer, called upon when His children are bored and in need of excitement.

I once attended a large denominational service in a well known church in Austin, Texas. For the entire sermon of at least 45 minutes, the pastor sat on a bar stool on the podium and talked about his relationship with his golfing friend, Willie Nelson. Never once did he say or even allude to the name of Jesus Christ.

This is a church age that claims that they know God; but in both fruits and works, they deny Him. This lukewarm Laodicean church is the one Jesus said He will vomit out of His mouth. It is the church that will be left behind when the Firstfruits Rapture comes. As very few were saved in the days of Noah, in like manner, very few are truly saved today. When the Firstfruits Rapture comes, only a few will be taken (this no doubt offends most of you, but this point will be demonstrated from Scripture in later chapters.) A type can be seen in this verse:

1 Peter 3:20

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

Regarding America and other more developed countries, it is a church age where men may sit in church on Sunday and then go home and click on the Internet searching for pornography. It is a church age in which people claim they are saved, but have a cigarette or drugs in one hand and a beer in the other. They are full of anger; they hate people; and they seldom read their Bibles or pray. They are a people that claim to be Christian, but have no understanding of God's truth. They do not or cannot examine themselves truthfully by God's Word to see if they are truly in the faith (2 Cor 13:5).

The question needs to be asked - are you one of those thus described? Are you following Jesus, or your own self?

The Laodicean Church

Laodicea means "human rights" or "the rights of the people." The name implies this was a church governed by the will of the people, rather than the will of God.

There are eleven bad things and no good things mentioned about the Laodicean church in Rev 3:14-22. It seems this church has forgotten that Jesus is the ultimate Authority, He is true, and He is the true Judge. They have forgotten that He is faithful, He is God Almighty, and He created all things. It is the most heavily rebuked and deceived church in the history of the church age; however, it sees itself as "the best." It is the only church of the seven in which the entire church (with the exception of the few overcomers) will be spit out (rejected).

This church is described as lukewarm, indifferent, not concerned with right and wrong, or with good and evil. They take a neutral position: one of "live and let live; don't rock the boat; and don't cause waves." They are trying to serve two masters - God and self (or the world). They are positive they are right. At best, their understanding of God's Word, obedience, sin, repentance, and the fruits of the Spirit, is only lukewarm.

It is the worst of all the seven churches, yet the most confident. They claim they are rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing; however, God judges them to be *wretched*, which is the result of having either no faith or faith like a wave. It comes from a lack of truth, sound doctrine, and understanding. They are *miserable*, tossed about with all kinds of incorrect doctrines, which come in like the wind from every direction. They are *poor* in wisdom, in knowledge, in faith, and in the Word of God. They are not zealous for the truth, but are *blind* to their true condition and to Satan's schemes.

They think their condition is just the opposite of what it really is. They gather around themselves teachers that say what their selfishness, emotions, and deceived hearts want to hear. They are shamefully *naked*. They do not have on the white garments of righteousness, but are clothed with the black wool of deceit, which is no clothing at all. This church is shown to be naked, *but they do not know these things*. Some are even positive they are saved, but they are positively wrong.

Proverbs 14:16

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

One of the most appalling aspects of this church is that they are totally ignorant of all these things. They are unaware of their true spiritual condition. They are, sometimes, *willingly* ignorant. They are sometimes so deceived and blind that *they do not even recognize that the letter to the church of the Laodiceans is actually a letter to them*. As a result, they do not seek to change or repent. It may be said that these are

people that go to church, sing spiritual songs, pray to God, and then Monday through Saturday live as if Jesus does not exist. They behave as if they will never have to face the judgment.

Laodiceans are told to buy of Jesus gold that is refined by the fire. They are told to anoint their eyes with ointment, so they can see their true spiritual condition as God sees it. The Lord appears to be admonishing them to be zealous for the things of God - wisdom, knowledge, and truth - and to hate every evil way. He is telling them to repent.

Jesus is shown outside the door of this church, not inside. He is depicted as knocking on the door of the church and on the individual's heart, but the Laodiceans do not want to let Him in. They do not want to be shown they are wrong and will perish. They do not want to see their true blind and wretched condition. They do not want correction or truth. Often, ministers, churches, and ministries focus more on getting more money and more people, rather than on humbleness, brokenness, and good, sound doctrine.

This is a description of the last church - the worst of all – the future of this church when Jesus returns is that they will be spit out. This is a description of the most confident church of them all, yet it is the most deceived church that has ever existed; however, *they do not know or understand it*. This is the description of *today's church*. The verses on the Laodicean church are in perfect harmony with many other verses that tell how the times would be, leading up to the Tribulation.

We would all do well to heed the words of Jesus:

Revelation 3:22

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

A major contributor to this sad state is that most of the church has been fed milk only, and even this milk often contains deadly errors. The doctrine of Salvation of the Soul, the subject of this book, is virtually unknown to most Christians in this day and age.

Heaven's Gate and Hell's Flame

I have been witness on two occasions to a play that is being put on throughout the United States (and even, I understand, the world) by groups of committed Christians. One of these dramas is known as the "Book of Life"; another is known as "Heaven's Gate & Hell's Flame". These productions are quite popular in today's evangelical circles. I have no criticism of the efforts of these groups to win people to the Lord. No doubt, many people have been won to the cause of Christ in *spite* of the misleading teachings of this drama, and I rejoice with those *"in heaven over one sinner that repenteth"*. God presently has chosen to use imperfect men to proclaim His gospel (among which group I am certainly to be counted a member); much of the time He saves the sinner in spite of whatever error is being presented in the name of the Lord.

But I do object to the erroneous teachings thereby being promoted - that all you have to do is confess your belief in Jesus as your Savior, and when you die you will be promptly and grandly granted admittance into the Kingdom of Heaven, and will live happily ever after in His glorious light. These dramas completely ignore the necessity that we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and it is *there* that Jesus determines if you are *worthy* to enter the Kingdom. Perhaps I have startled some of you at this point, and you are thinking:

(What is this heresy? Do we not all have on the robe of Christ's righteousness, and is not this entrance thereby guaranteed? Is this not a central doctrine of the evangelical Church today?)

To this I would reply: Yes, you were guaranteed eternal life the moment you truly and biblically believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior – that He died for your sins, that He was buried, and that He rose from the dead on the third day, all in accordance as it had been prophesied in Scripture. This "guarantee" is the "doctrine of eternal security of the believer", which many in the Church even dispute today. I have no quarrel with the doctrine of eternal security. However, the preachers do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures. They interpret Scripture in light of their doctrines, which they have been taught at seminary; and they refuse to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit Who is shouting to their deaf ears, "Spirit of Error" (1 John 4:6). We must approach Scripture without the confusions of the doctrines and traditions of men, in order that true revelation can be given by our Teacher and blessed Holy Spirit. We must keep our minds open to His teachings:

1 John 2:27

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

If you approach Scripture with preconceived notions, whether they be your own, or that which was taught you by another, then the Spirit of God has little opportunity to teach you the truth, and you will continue in your error. But if you will humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and confess that only He can teach you the whole truth, then He will bring revelation to your starved soul. The arrogance and pride of today's evangelical Church (with a few exceptions, of course) that what they have been taught in seminary or even what passes as teaching on most of the popular television ministries is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth has blinded their eyes to the essential truths the Lord would have them to know.

The "Book of Life" Dramas

These dramas I use as an example further confuse the issue by teaching that when a person arrives at the pearly gates of heaven, he needs only to inquire whether his name is written in the Book of Life - those whose names are written therein are granted admittance with much fanfare and hoopla; and those whose names are not written therein are cast into an inferno [whether this is Hades or the Lake of Fire is not made clear]. This is at complete variance with the Word of God. The Bible teaches that a lost person, having died, goes immediately to Hades, (or more accurately, to the *lost side* of Hades - the abode of the dead), for it is written concerning the rich man (in the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man):

Luke 16:23-24

The rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hell [Hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

So the unsaved person certainly does not inquire at the gates of Heaven whether his name is written in the Book of Life. The appropriate scene for him is at the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ, after 1,000 years from now (at least) when the unsaved dead are raised to appear in their sinful bodies to face God at the Great White Throne Judgment. And this is certainly *not* the pearly gates. This is a judgment to

determine the severity of their eternal punishment, because they have *already* been judged as to whether they are saved or lost, as it is written,

John 3:18

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And likewise, the saved person does not appear at the pearly gates of Heaven to inquire as to whether his name is written in the Book of Life. His name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life at the moment he believed on Jesus Christ as his Savior (or perhaps it could be argued even from the foundation of the world), and will remain there forever. However, although this same person does go to "heaven" eventually (but not at this time), he must *first* appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, *not* to determine whether his name is written in this Book (for if it were not, he would not even *be* at the Judgment Seat), but to give account of every deed he did while in his sinful body upon earth *after* the day he was saved, whether good or bad, and to have his *works* judged at that time as to whether they are wood, hay, and stubble (if so, he shall suffer loss), or they are gold, silver, and precious stones (if so, then he shall receive rewards).

By far the most precious reward that can be granted at this time is entrance into the *Kingdom* of Heaven – the 1,000 year reign of Jesus and His co-heirs over the earth – (not to be confused with the *heaven* we normally think of). The alternative is to suffer loss, at which time there shall be great weeping and gnashing of teeth. This reward depends on being judged *worthy* to attain Salvation of the Soul, which is the primary focus of this writing. It is my objective to inform you of this doctrine [*"What thing is this? What new doctrine is this?" (Mark 1:27)*] that has been all but totally ignored by today's Laodicean Church. It is not a new doctrine; it can be found on every page of the New Testament – but the eyes of believers have been blinded to these truths by the leaven prophesied in Matthew 13:33.

And so I object to these dramas, as good as they may seem, and as much fruit as they may seem to bear, because they are teaching great error – a fact which I hope to make clear to you.

The Christian Walk

The truth of the matter is that the Bible teaches us that our initial salvation is not the end and fulfillment of our lives here on earth, but only the beginning of a race that God has laid out for each of us individually. This race has trials and tribulations along the way (none of which are beyond our capacity to endure through the strength of the Holy Spirit) that are designed by God to produce fruit in each of us, in order that God may be glorified, as it is written,

John 15:8

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

So what is this doctrine - The Salvation of the Soul? Was not my soul saved when I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Indeed, no; it was not. When you were born again, you experienced the Salvation of the Spirit, and you passed from death to life. The Salvation of the Soul, however, is an entirely separate matter; and whether or not your soul is saved (at the Judgment Seat of Christ) will determine your future for at least 1,000 years (until the end of the millennial reign of Christ). Moreover, the truth of the matter is that not all saved Christians will reign and rule with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven. Most will not. This may offend the flesh, but it is truth nonetheless.

Two Truths

Consider these two great truths:

Salvation of the Spirit is a free gift, and it cannot be lost.

Salvation of the Soul is a prize or reward, and it can be lost.

There is great peril in confusing these two truths as a result of not *rightly dividing* the Word of God. And worse, there is even greater tragedy of not even being *aware* of the doctrine of Salvation of the Soul. Not being awarded Salvation of the Soul, or "losing your life" at the Judgment Seat of Christ, can be seen in the following Scriptures which I will explore further throughout this writing.

FOR WHAT SHALL A MAN BE PROFITED

Matthew 16:24-27

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Evangelists all over the world have used these verses in Matthew to preach to the lost. But the fact is, this verse is referring to the Salvation of the *Soul*, which no man can obtain except his *spirit* has first been saved by his profession of faith in Jesus Christ. No lost man can take up his cross, and follow Jesus, much less deny himself. He must first *believe* in Jesus Christ. Rather, this verse deals with the Salvation of the Soul, which concerns the reward of every man according to his works. Notice also that the passage mentions "lose his soul", and "lose his life". These two terms – "life", and "soul" – are used interchangeably, and in fact, in Greek they are indeed the same word: Strong's 5590 – "psuche" – which in various places in the King James Version is translated "life, soul, mind, heart". And when is this reward to be received? Verse 27 tells us it will be when *the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of His Father with his angels* - at His Second Coming. Scripture further designates this time and place as being at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Whenever we approach the subject of salvation, there is one thing of utmost importance that must be recognized, and that is the Scriptural distinction between the spirit and the soul. According to Scripture, man is clearly portrayed as being comprised of three important elements – the spirit, the soul, and the body:

1Thessalonians 5:23

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me ask you a question. Why would Paul find it necessary to pray this, if it were not possible that your whole spirit and soul and body would *not* be preserved blameless when you appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ (in the context of the verse noted as "unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ")? Obviously, then, there is a potential danger here about which Paul was praying. There is a fundamental of wholeness that is desirable and available for each part of our being.

The Bible makes a clear distinction between the human spirit, soul and body. The difference between our physical bodies and the other two, or course, is not difficult to ascertain. But the difference between soul and spirit, and the way that each relates to the other, including our bodies, is important to learn – not just for reasons of self-understanding – but because the Bible places emphasis on each separate part.

God's word doesn't present the fact that we have three parts to our being for reasons of philosophical argument. Neither is the tripartite nature of persons some hangover of ancient thought to be replaced today by newer notions. No; God reveals the structure of our being by His Word because He wants to accomplish certain things in each separate part of us. He wants us to understand about each part – from His Word.

Spirit, Soul, and Body

The Spirit

Contrary to some opinions, soul and spirit are not one and the same. In Luke, after Elizabeth has greeted her and confirmed her having conceived the Messiah, Mary exalted:

Luke 1:46-47

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Without going into great detail, I would define the spirit as that faculty by which a man is able to commune with God and which none of the lower animals possess. It is also the life-giving force which animates the body (*for as the body without the spirit is dead - James 2:26*). A dog or a cat may be said to have a soul (for does not your pet have its own unique personality?) and a body, but it does not possess a spirit; for only man was created in the image of God, who is a Spirit. For this reason, animals are not able to worship God, for it is written,

John 4:24

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

When God in the Garden of Eden gave commandments to Adam, He told him:

Genesis 2:17

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

But obviously, Adam did not immediately die *physically*, because we later read that Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years, and then he died. (Gen 5:5). But the part of him that "died" immediately was his spirit, and the sin that contaminated his spirit caused him to lose the intimate communion with God that he possessed when he was created. Likewise, all the spirits of lost men are considered "dead" by God.

Ephesians 2:5

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

When we believe in the Lord Jesus, and become "saved", that part of us (the spirit) that was dead becomes "born again", and, because of the sacrifice that Jesus made on the Cross, the Holy Spirit is able to come in and "regenerate" our dead spirits, and we are then able to commune with God. Sin destroys our relationship with God and our capacity to worship Him. Rebirth in Christ makes renewed worship and fellowship with God a living possibility "in *spirit* and truth".

(Concerning the life-span of Adam, it is noteworthy that technically he *did* also die *physically* in the day he ate thereof, because one day unto the Lord is as a thousand years (2Peter 3:8). Therefore, he *did* die in that "day"; and, accordingly, none of the Old Testament characters lived for more than one thousand years on the earth. Methuselah lived the longest, 969 years [Gen 5:27]).

The Soul

The soul, however, is the organ in man for thought, will, and emotion – something the lower animals also share (at least to a much smaller degree). And lastly, the body is that part of man with which we communicate with the material world through our touch, eyes, ears, smell, and taste. Because we as human beings are composed of spirit, soul, and body, and because all three parts have been contaminated with sin, our ultimate salvation must accordingly reach all these parts. Consider these Scriptures:

John 3:6

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

The latter portion of the above verse speaks of the salvation of the *spirit*.

The Body

Romans 8:23

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

The above verse speaks of salvation of the *body*.

James 1:21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

The above verse speaks of Salvation of the *Soul*.

Most of the focus of the New Testament is on the soul. The Holy Spirit desires to come to "*restore my soul*" (Psa. 23:3). This is what Paul is talking to the Ephesians about when he says:

Ephesians 4:22-23

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

The words "be renewed in the spirit of your mind" indicate how the intellect/thoughts (mind) need to be controlled by the "new" in our lives – the Holy Spirit residing within, rather than by the spirit of the world around us. (This is why, several verses later, Paul contrasts the potential of being either manipulated by the devil (see 4:27) or being continually refilled with the Holy Spirit (see 5:18).

By reading the whole passage we can see that a group of believers who are already well established in salvation's grace (see Ephesians chapter 1 and 2) are being addressed about our very human struggles with everything from the crude and the lewd (see 4:17-24) to reckless words, anger, lying and unforgiveness (see 4:25-32). Simply put, their spirits were reborn, but their souls still need restoration from the results of past sins which have damaged us beyond hope (except for His healing ministry - referred to in 1Peter 2:25 as the "*shepherd and bishop of your souls*".) This helps us to understand his plea to born-again believers, calling on them not to be unresponsive to the Holy Spirit (see 4:30), but to allow Him to enable them to grow – to be built up – in the will of God (see 5:17-18).

The soul is the essential "you". It includes at least three main essential facets and functions that all together comprise the personality:

- 1). The intellect – the processes of our intelligence, our minds, our thoughts, our reasoning powers.
- 2). The emotions – the processes of our temperaments, our feelings, our attitudes, our moods.
- 3). The will – the processes of our choices, our decisions, our determination or our willfulness.

Most of what lures, drives, attracts, convinces, persuades or motivates you is generated at the thought (intellect) or feeling (emotions) level. Affected by this interplay of intellect and emotion is your will, the decision-making center of your soul.

The human will is the most awesome feature of the soul – indeed, of your whole being – for it determines destiny. By reason of the will, the soul functions as the command center of the whole personality. What goes on in my soul determines how I feel and what attitude will motivate me today. What goes on in my soul decides how I think, and what I will learn today. But beyond the input of my emotions and intellect, what goes on in my soul will decide what actions or choices I will make today (my will):

- 1). Those lessons I must know to grow in the understanding of the Lord.
- 2). Those feelings I need to respond to or reject concerning obedience to the will of God.
- 3). Those attitudes of facts I need to process according to the Holy Spirit's directives.

All of this is occurring in my soul – day by day. And how my mind and emotions interactionally function will generate decisions that either deepen my problems or release my progress. With this understanding, the absolute need for my soul to be restored – to be renewed by the Spirit – to be saved – becomes clearer than ever. My reborn spirit may make possible the reality and sincerity of my worship to God, but it will be through the restoring of my soul that I determine the quality and character of my service for Him. It is this Salvation of the Soul that is the primary focus of this writing.

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION OF THE SOUL

So then let us examine some of the Scriptures in the New Testament that pertain to the Salvation of the Soul. To begin with, I will again quote this passage:

Matthew 16:24-27

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Please note that Jesus was addressing his disciples, and not outsiders. Therefore, we can assume that they are saved ones (with the arguable exception of Judas Iscariot), and that His words were directed toward saved saints, and not unsaved sinners. For the most part, the Bible is written to the saved, not to the lost. The lost man can not even understand the Bible – except that perhaps the Holy Spirit will quicken certain verses to him to lead him to salvation.

This is a great error among today's Christians – they take the verses they like and apply those verses to themselves; and they take the verses they do not like, and apply them to the lost. Thus, their traditions have made the Word of God of no effect (Mark 7:13).

"If any man would come after me" – That is, if any man *among the saved* would follow the Lord. The man is a saved disciple, and he wishes especially to follow the Lord. *"Follow me"* tells us that there are conditions to "following the Lord", and they are hereafter set forth.

"Let him deny himself" – Denying one's self denotes a setting aside of the mind to God, so that in all things he may not follow his own mind nor be self-centered. This is, of course, self-evident, because how can anyone follow the Lord if he is following himself?

"And take up his cross, and follow me" – This goes even further than denying self, for self-denying is only the disregarding of self, whereas taking up the cross is obeying God. To take up the cross means to accept whatever God has decided for that person and to be willing to suffer according to the will of God.

How little we hear in today's Church about suffering! We are told that Jesus took our suffering on the Cross, in order that we would not have to suffer here. How insidiously wrong is this doctrine as it is being taught! The suffering Jesus took upon himself was the penalty of sin, so that we would not have to suffer (that is, suffer eternal torment in the Lake of Fire). Elsewhere in Scripture we are instructed to suffer for Jesus, such as it is written (to list two verses):

Romans 8:17

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Philippians 1:29

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

Thus, by denying self and taking up the cross, we thereby are able to truly follow the Lord.

"for whosoever would save his life (soul)" – The "for" connects the following word with what has preceded it. This connective shows that the phrase *"deny himself, and take up his cross"* in the earlier verse is one and the same as saving or losing the soul mentioned in the verse which follows. This speaks of a person who has a desire to follow the Lord, but nevertheless is unwilling to deny himself and take up his cross. This speaks of a person who is reluctant to disregard himself, to renounce his privileges and perquisites in the world, and allow himself to suffer for the sake of obeying God. For the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 6:12

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient (profitable): all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

Thus, we see here the fact that we have a glorious freedom in Christ to do all (all that does not violate the Royal Law of Love); yet the one who would follow Jesus must realize that all things are not expedient for him; that is, not all he does (without sin) necessarily profits him withal. Thus the Lord is telling us that if a man would be so mindful of himself as to be unwilling to deny his self, take up his cross, and suffer for the sake of obeying God, that man will eventually lose his soul in the next world (age). To lose his soul means (among other things even more awful to contemplate) that such a man will lose the privilege of ruling and reigning with Christ in the next age.

I feel it is necessary to inject a note of caution here: the Lord does not want us to be ascetics; He only would have us not to be captivated by the things of the world. The things of the world may be legitimate (in the sense they are not sinful in and of themselves); yet not all these things are profitable to us (that is, they will not produce godly fruit in us). Yet, in giving up the things of the world, we must be careful to follow only the leading of the Holy Spirit. We could err in the other direction, if we set our own agenda, and decide for ourselves what we should deny ourselves. This, too, would be vanity. Rest assured, once you have determined to follow the Lord at all cost, He will make it very plain to you what He has designated, "This must go!" We are instructed to "do all things for the glory of God"; but if we indulge in the "things" of the world to an excess, we have gone astray.

"Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake" – This is the self-denial and cross-bearing spoken of in the preceding verse. It simply means that whoever is willing for the sake of the Lord to deny his own thoughts and plans and desires so as to not be satisfied with the things of the world but instead be willing to undergo much suffering (for the sake of the Lord), he will in the next age be given by the Lord his heart's desire with full blessing and joy (*I will make you ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord* - Matt. 25:21).

Hence to lose the soul now (which requires self-denial, cross-bearing, and following Jesus) is definitely not what most commonly and incorrectly think of as "to perish". This concept has no relationship to the ordinary idea of "save" or "perish". This fact is quite evident, because if saving one's soul means having eternal life, why does the Lord declare that a person must lose his soul for the Lord's sake? If losing one's soul suggests going to the Lake of Fire, then in requiring us to lose our souls for His sake would He mean that He wants us to go down the Lake of Fire? Thus, we can readily see that this issue has nothing to do with the salvation of the spirit, or with eternal life, or with being sent to the Lake of Fire.

If "*whosoever would save his life shall lose it*" means that whoever does not deny self will go to the Lake of Fire, then the words "*whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it*" would mean that whoever goes to the Lake of Fire for the Lord's sake shall have eternal life. You can readily see this would be an impossible conception.

"*whosoever would save his life shall lose it*" – So when will this man lose his soul? Again, the Lord tells us that it shall be when "*the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and THEN he shall reward every man according to his works*".

And what exactly does it mean, "to lose it", or to "lose his life"? All Christians raised to the Judgment Seat of Christ will be in their own flesh and blood body – the same body they previously lived in on earth. It is a mistake to equate the rapture with the out-resurrection from the dead. They are two separate events, and the rapture precedes the out-resurrection. We are raptured (if then living; if otherwise, then raised from the dead) to the Judgment Seat of Christ; it is there we are judged as to whether we are "*worthy to attain that world, and the resurrection from the dead*" (Luke 20:35).

1 Corinthians 3:15

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Matthew 16:26

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

And what is this loss that this man shall suffer? It is the same Greek word in Matt. 16:26 above where it says "*lose his own soul (life)*". Thus a man has the potential to literally lose his life at the Judgment Seat. Having been raised from the dead in his flesh and blood body to appear at the Judgment Seat, he then loses his life again, and is sent back to corruption, having no part in the millennial reign.

Matthew 25:30

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But, you may say, what about 1Cor. 15:51-58? This is a good question, and this confusion needs to be addressed. But to do so at this point would be getting ahead of ourselves; this question is more appropriately addressed at length in chapter 22.

The out-resurrection (extanastasis – the "out-resurrection" from among those who are raised from the dead) is the "out-resurrection" that Paul lived his whole life striving (works, not grace) to attain:

Philippians 3:11

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection (out-resurrection) of the dead.

Lazarus was *resurrected* from the dead; but he surely died once again at a later time. Paul's hope was to be *out-resurrected* NEVER TO DIE AGAIN from among those who are *resurrected* from the dead. It is not a free gift; it is something Paul was striving to attain. It is a *reward* that every man has the *potential* to attain, but such attainment is a *reward* according to his works ("*and then He shall reward every man according to his works*" Mat. 16:27).

Luke 20:35-36

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: 36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

This body is animated by blood, and the soul is in the blood ("*the life is in the blood*" – Lev 17:11). To lose his life at the Judgment Seat of Christ means that his flesh and blood body will once again die, and return to corruption. This is elsewhere discussed in this book as the Second Death for Christians. Because a flesh and blood body cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1Cor. 15:50), this person who has "lost his life" at the Judgment Seat is found to be not qualified to rule and reign during the millennium, and is accordingly not awarded a glorified body (never to die) *at this time* (this will occur at the second (last) resurrection, and is discussed fully in later chapters.)

Many Bible commentators teach that the "losing of the life" and the "saving of the life" all take place within this lifetime. But that is simply not so, as not only the above verse, but also John 12 proves:

John 12:25

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

Here Jesus clearly teaches that the two events take place at different times: "*in this world*" is this present life on earth; "*unto life eternal*" is referring to the life we receive in the age to come. This is the same phrase the rich young ruler used when he said to Jesus, "*Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*" We have not yet inherited the eternal life in question. This happens at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We can see John 12:25 quoted above phrased slightly differently in the verse below; here we see the inheritance as a future event (the *inheritance* will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter):

Matthew 19:29

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall [a future event] inherit everlasting life.

"*according to his works*" – Such works are divided into two categories: (1) saving his soul now, and (2) losing his soul now for the Lord's sake. Therefore, it should be perfectly clear by now that if a person should cater to the things of the world in order to satisfy his own flesh, and will thus refuse to suffer for Christ (if asked by Him), he will receive the Lord's reproof instead of receiving the Lord's approval when He comes, and no doubt there will even be *great weeping and gnashing of teeth* when, too late, he realizes the folly of his life's efforts.

How is the spirit saved? We are told that in John 3:6 – "*that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*". In the context of John 3 we are told that he who believes has eternal life. Accordingly, salvation of the spirit means presently possessing eternal life. So how, then, is the soul saved? The passage we have been considering tells us that if we lose our soul here for the Lord's sake, our soul shall be saved in the next age (more specifically, at the Judgment Seat of Christ). Thus we may make the following comparisons:

Salvation of the spirit is to possess a born-again *spirit* for all eternity;

Salvation of the soul is to possess the Kingdom and have "life for that age" (and beyond).

The spirit is saved through believing in Christ's having borne the Cross for me;

The soul is saved by my bearing a cross myself for His sake.

The spirit is saved because Christ laid down His life for me;

The soul is saved because I deny myself and lay down my life for His sake.

The spirit is saved by *grace* on the basis of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;

The soul is saved by *hope* through consistently following the Lord: it is a life-long matter; a course to be finished.

By grace through faith the spirit is saved, ("*he that believeth on the Son hath eternal life*" - (John 3:36);

Through works the soul is saved, (*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only* - James 2:24).

The salvation of the spirit is decided today;

The salvation of the soul is to be decided at the coming of the Lord, but it is based on how we lived our lives here on earth today.

Salvation of the Spirit can never be lost;

Salvation of the Soul can be lost at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Meaning of Losing the Soul

I have already shown that part of the meaning, terrible to contemplate just in itself, is that those who lose their soul at the Judgment Seat of Christ suffer the loss of the right to rule and reign with Christ in His 1,000 year Kingdom. But the consequences of losing of the soul go even deeper, as we will see in later chapters throughout this book.

Luke 12:15-21

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth [Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it].

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee [shall lose it]: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself [seeks to save his life], and is not rich toward God.

This rich man, due to the abundance of his grain and goods, has given his own soul enjoyment, pleasure, and satisfaction in *this* age. He has already gained his soul now. Thus to gain the soul in this age is to pursue the things of the world – riches, fame, popularity, and so forth – which things are not necessarily sinful in and of themselves. But if a person pursues these things to the neglect of the pursuit of the Kingdom of God, then they become idols; and these things become between a man and His loving Creator. For it is written,

Matthew 6:33

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matthew 19:24

And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Thus Jesus told the rich young ruler in this other gospel version of the same account in Luke:

Luke 18:18-25

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

In this account it is important to note that the question posed was, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He did not ask, "What must I do to be saved?" There is a distinct and vast difference. This rich young ruler, contrary to most popular teachings, was already saved. Because notice that Jesus did not tell him to "believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved". Instead, He told him to keep the commandments which were already given under the law. Thus He was instructing him to obey.

Then Jesus pointed out the one obvious flaw in the young man's life: that he was unwilling to give up his great riches, in order that he could then "*come, and follow me*". This rich young ruler was unwilling to deny himself the great pleasures and advantages he had in this life because of all his riches. Thus, he was unwilling to pay the price, which was to deny himself, and take up the cross, and follow Jesus. He counted the cost, and found it to be too great. And as a result, he would be unable to "inherit eternal life"

("life for the age" in the Greek) at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and he would therefore be disinherited, and "lose his soul" at that time.

John 6:37

And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

The above verse refers to salvation of the spirit. Yet the Lord places *conditions* for those who desire to follow Him and be His disciples:

Luke 14:26

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:33

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Here the Lord once again brings up the question concerning the soul (life). He first mentions family members, who are dear to most of us. Then he mentions the soul. If a man considers his soul to be precious in his own eyes, and refuses to lose it here on earth, the Lord simply says this man cannot be my disciple. The Lord does not say that we must rid ourselves of even our very families; but He does say that if you love them more than the Lord, you cannot be his disciple. Anything that you value more than the Lord is considered an idol in His eyes. Remember the Apostle John's admonition: "*Little children, keep yourselves from idols*". (1John 5:21)

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (vs. 27) This explains the preceding verse. This is the "hate ... his own life also".

What then, you may ask, is this cross? I believe we can see it illustrated in our Lord's own life when He said in the Garden of Gethsemane, "*nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done*" (Luke 22:42). Jesus asked the Father not to answer as the Son wills, but as the Father wills. This is the cross. To take the cross is to choose the will that the Father has already decided. Yet here again a person must be careful not to err – we must not *create* crosses for ourselves. We should *take* the cross, not *make* it.

In addition, the Lord does not say that he who does not take up his *burden* and follow after Him is not worthy of Him. It is a *cross* we must take up and bear. A burden is not a cross; we should not confuse the two. A burden is something inescapable; a cross is something we choose, and can therefore be avoided. The Lord chose the Cross at Calvary; likewise, we must choose the cross that the Lord places before us.

Then the Lord gives three parables that illustrate bearing the cross.

COUNT THE COST

The Lord Jesus never tried to coax men into a glib profession of faith. Neither did He seek to attract a large following by preaching a popular message. In fact, whenever people began to swarm after Him, He

would turn to them and sift them by setting forth the sternest terms of discipleship. On one of these occasions, our Lord warned those who would follow Him that they should first count the cost. He said:

Luke 14:28-32

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

Here He likened the Christian life to a building operation and to a war. It is sheer folly to start building a tower, He said, unless you are sure you have enough funds to complete it. Otherwise, the unfinished structure will stand as a monument to your lack of foresight.

How true! It is one thing to make a decision for Christ in the warm emotion of a mass evangelistic rally. But it is quite another thing to deny one's self, and take up the cross daily, and follow Christ. Although it costs nothing to become a Christian, it costs plenty to be a consistent believer walking in a path of sacrifice, separation and suffering for Christ's sake. It is one thing to begin the Christian race well, but it is quite another thing to slug it out, day after day, through fair weather and foul, through prosperity and adversity, through joy and through grief. A critical world is watching. By some strange instinct, it realizes that the Christian life deserves everything or nothing. When it sees an out-and-out Christian, it may sneer, and scoff and ridicule - yet inwardly, it has deep respect for the man who recklessly abandons himself to Christ. But when it sees a half-hearted Christian, it has nothing but contempt. It begins to mock him, saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish. He made a big commotion when he was converted, but now he's very much like the rest of us. He started out a high speed, but now he's spinning his wheels." And so the Savior said, "You had better count the cost!"

"Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him." This can be the unfortunate result of withholding even a small portion for yourselves: this man has lost his soul. The Salvation of the Soul is a reward granted for *finishing* the course, not for just beginning it. Hence, the principal shown in the verse: *"But he that endureth to the end shall be saved (Matt. 10:22).* And thus, anyone who holds back anything, and will not give his all to the Lord, is at risk for not finishing the course. In this same vein of thought, consider these verses concerning the Lord, lest you should consider Him a hard taskmaster:

James 5:11

Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

1 Corinthians 10:13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Matthew 11:30

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

His second illustration concerned a king who was about to declare war on another. Would it not be sensible for him first to figure whether his 10,000 soldiers would be able to defeat the enemy's army amounting to twice that amount? How absurd it would be if he should declare war first, then reconsider when the armies were marching toward each other. The only thing left would be to hoist the white flag, and to send out a surrender team, abjectly crawling in the dust, and meekly asking for terms of peace.

It is no exaggeration to liken the Christian life to war. There are the fierce enemies - the world, the flesh and the devil. There are discouragements, bloodshed, and suffering. There are the long weary hours of vigil, and the yearning for the light of day. There are tears and toil and testings. And there is daily death. Anyone who sets out to follow Christ should remember Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha. And then he should count the cost. It is either an absolute commitment to Christ, or a sniveling surrender with all that that means of disgrace and degradation.

So we see in the above two parables, that if we are not willing to commit our all, and hold back even a small portion, we will experience insufficiency by that amount, and risk failing to win the objective. Thereby we see that whoever does not take up his cross and follow the Lord wholly is neither worthy nor capable of being a disciple of the Lord. How do we know for sure that this is the proper conclusion? Because the Lord Himself confirms this in the following verse: "*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple*" (vs. 33). You cannot hold on to the Lord with one hand, and on to the world with the other. You must lay down one side or the other – either the world, or Christ. Consider the following verses:

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Luke 9:62

And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

With these two illustrations, the Lord Jesus warned His hearers against any impulsive decisions to be His disciples. He could promise them persecution, tribulation and distress. They should first count the cost!

And what is the cost? The next verse answers the question:

Luke 14:33

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

The cost is "everything" - all a man has and is. It meant this for the Savior; it cannot mean less for those who will follow Him. If He Who was rich beyond all description voluntarily became poor, shall His disciples win the crown by some less costly means?

Then the Lord Jesus concluded His discourse with this summation:

Luke 14:34

Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

This parable depicts the consequences of the actions of the persons discussed in the preceding two parables. Matt. 5:13 says that we Christians "*are the salt of the earth*"; therefore, the salt here in Luke must point to believers.

In Bible times, it seems that people did not have pure salt, such as we have on our tables today. Their salt had various impurities, such as sand, etc. It was somehow possible for the salt to lose its saltiness; the residue was insipid and worthless. It could not be used either as soil or fertilizer. At times it was used to make a footpath. Thus it was "*good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men*" (Mat 5:13).

The application of the illustration is clear. There is one main purpose of the Christian's existence - to glorify God by a life that is utterly poured out for Him. The Christian may lose his savor by laying up treasures on earth, by catering to his own comfort and pleasure, by trying to make a name for himself in the world, by prostituting his life and talents on the unworthy world. If the believer misses the central goal of his existence, then he has missed everything. He is neither utilitarian nor ornamental. His fate is, like the savorless salt, to be trampled under foot of men - by their derision, and contempt and scorn.

The "land" represents the kingdom of heaven to come. To place an unsavoured Christian in this Kingdom would not be fitting. The "dunghill" is a defiled and unclean place, and suggests the Lake of Fire. It would neither be appropriate to place a Christian there. Since he is neither fit for the Lake of Fire or for the Kingdom of Heaven, he must then be cast out, which is exactly what the Lord says in the Parable of the Talents:

Matthew 25:30

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The question is not how much I have done, but whether or not I am on the altar while doing it. I hope all who see these words will pray that the Lord will consecrate them (take them out of the world system). He will only do this for those who are willing (but He also has a way of making us willing). Our duty is to submit ourselves, to humble ourselves under His mighty hand. The warning is that it will be too late when that day (the day of His coming) arrives. It must be done now.

Just as God places Heaven and Hell before the sinner to choose, so He places the Kingdom and the world before the Christian to choose.

Unfortunately, the pabulum being taught in most of today's pulpits has convinced most Christians that they have already made the only choice. It is very sad to contemplate how blind they are to the truth, for Jesus, addressing this very problem, said,

Revelation 3:18

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

The final words are these:

Luke 14:35

..... He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Often when our Lord had uttered some hard saying, He added these words. It is as if He knew that all men would not receive them. He knew that some would try to explain them away, to dull the sharp edge of His cutting demands. But He knew also that there would be open hearts, young and old, who would bow to His claims as being worthy of Himself. So He left the door open! "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Those who hear are the ones who count the cost and still say:

"I have decided to follow Jesus,
Tho' no one joins me, still I will follow,
The world behind me, the Cross before me,
No turning back, no turning back."

The Overcomers

In chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation, Jesus made several promises to the overcomers in each of the seven Churches. The overcomers addressed here are those who have lost their souls while on earth – they are those who have laid down their all – who have forsaken all, and followed Him successfully to the end of the race. Many Bible commentators incorrectly teach that the overcomer is defined in 1 John, where he says,

1 John 5:5

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Yes, this is true. *Only a believer in Jesus Christ* can overcome the world. But this is no guarantee that he will *automatically* overcome. Furthermore, this is not the complete definition of an overcomer. This is found in the following verse:

Revelation 12:11

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

In the above verse we see that to be an overcomer one must meet certain other requirements. That an overcomer must be born again is attested by the requirement of *the blood of the Lamb*. But the overcomer must also give witness by the *word of his testimony*, and he must *love not his life even unto the death* (must not seek to save his life even if it means dying physically for the sake of his testimony).

That by 'overcomers' our Lord does not mean believers in general, the mixed mass of the saved, but - as the word implies - a faithful and conquering section only, is put beyond all doubt by one crucial and decisive case. "Thou hast a few names," He says to the Sardian Angel (Rev. iii. 4) - 'names'; as though looking over the Angel's shoulder at the Church roll lying open before Him - who, because clean-robed, should one day walk with Him in white. These 'few,' walking in sanctity, cannot be the only regenerate souls in Sardis; for the Lord accepts the whole Church as an 'ecclesia,' that is, a body of the vitally 'out-

called'; and the 'dead' Angel himself, who is not among the 'few names,' is reminded of his conversion - "Remember how thou hast received, and didst hear." Throughout the Letters it is "he that overcometh" - not an overcoming Church, nor even an overcoming group, but the solitary saint shining like a star above a corrupt Church and a midnight world.

Every one of the Churches our Lord thus separates into two sections; only a perfect Church could consist of one division alone, and He names no such Church; seven times He holds out peculiar glories matching exceptional nobility, and seven times He gives the gravest warnings (by implication) ever given to servants of God. In the words of Bengel: "There is a remarkable difference between each address and each promise. The address has immediate respect to the seven Churches in Asia, and consequently also to all Churches and pastors, in all times and places; the promise, on the other hand, is given forth to all spiritual conquerors, not excluding those in Asia."

In the verse below, we see the definition of an overcomer who started well, but failed to finish the course as an overcomer, and was once again *overcome* himself:

2 Peter 2:20

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

Here we see that an overcomer, in addition to believing in Jesus Christ, is one who has *escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord*. But this is not the *knowledge* of the Lord that a Christian has when he first believes. This is the Greek word *epignosis* (Strong's 1922), and is the word that denotes a deep, full knowledge sometimes referred to by commentators as "super-knowledge". God uses the terms "gnosis" vs. "epignosis". Gnosis is simply knowledge, and is that which Christians obtain through growing on the "milk" doctrines; that is, the knowledge of what Jesus did for us on the Cross. Gnosis is the knowledge of the new birth; the Lord Jesus Christ; and as such, embraces the Cross, and the "first principles of Christ" and is described as "milk" as it is written,

Hebrews 5:12-13

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

Epignosis, on the other hand, is connected to the "meat" doctrines, and is described in the following verse:

Hebrews 5:14

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age [perfect], even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

Matthew 19:21

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect [- same word in the Greek], go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

Epignosis is the knowledge that leads to the full understanding of the doctrines surrounding Jesus' second coming. *Epignosis* is experiential full-knowledge that causes one to have a life full of hope - a hope in

having the privilege to share the glory of Christ at His appearing when He establishes His Kingdom. This full-knowledge, then, embraces the truths surrounding the second coming and describes a Christian who is on the road to obtaining a mature faith (Salvation of the Soul). In order for one to have this full-knowledge, he must *first* be saved, and then grow to understand it. Even the Apostle Paul prayed in Phil. 3:10, *"that I may know Him"*. Certainly, we should realize that, of all people, Paul knew the Lord Jesus; but what he is expressing here is a desire to know him fully, completely, and deeply. He is praying for "epignosis" knowledge. This knowledge is acquired through obedience to the Holy Spirit and the washing of the water of the Word (Eph. 5:26).

Contrary to what some teach, the letters to the seven Churches in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 are addressed solely to Christians. Many have tried to teach that the letters are to the "whole" Church, which consists mostly of believers, but includes some unbelievers. Hogwash! Jesus clearly says, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches"* (Rev. 2:11). Do you really believe that the Holy Spirit is addressing unbelievers when He speaks to His own Churches? Why would the Lord be addressing unbelievers? An unbeliever cannot even understand the things of God; much less is he even interested. 1Cor. 2:14 states that *"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

Why would Jesus be addressing those who can't understand anyway? The only message they would need to hear is *"believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved"*. Therefore, to presume that Jesus must be speaking to the unsaved here is absurd. This is what happens when commentators are not aware that there is a further division of the saved - the overcomers, and the non-overcomers. But for these teachers, there are no other options; and, accordingly, they teach great error.

Considering, then, that Jesus is certainly talking only to saved persons, the only conclusion you can draw concerning the overcomers mentioned in these verses is that they must be a separate group from within the whole of the Christians addressed therein. And who are these overcomers? They are the ones who are on the narrow way that leads to Life; that is, to the Salvation of the Soul - the ones who have laid down their own lives to serve the Lord. Therefore, the several promises made in the letters to the seven Churches are to the overcomers in the Church only, and not to the Church as a whole. I will have much more to say about the overcomers later in these writings.

I bring the overcomers up at this point only to show you that all these belong to one main group - the overcomers, those who have lost their souls in this life, and even the disciples (because you can't even *be* a disciple unless you first forsake all and follow Jesus, according to His own words.)

What blindness the Body of Christ suffers under today! Shame on the pastors who have ignorantly fed their own sheep only milk! Such presumption on the part of believers, who seldom if ever even read the Word for themselves, to think that we all are part of the Bride of Christ, or much less even that exalted group who shall rule and reign with Jesus! The Scriptures fairly scream throughout the gospels and the epistles: "No! No! A thousand times, No! "For many are called, but FEW are chosen". Wake up, brothers and sisters. Your pastors have deceived you, and you have even deceived yourselves, perhaps because you are hearers of the word only, and not doers, as James so eloquently put it:

James 1:22

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

CHAPTER THREE

Three: An Important Clue

One of the keys that unlock the mysteries and higher truths of the Word of God is understanding the principles of the number "three". These "keys" will help the reader to further understand God's plan for man to rule over this earth.

These keys were first taught by the Apostle Paul throughout the New Testament world. Later, about the fourth century, they were lost to the Christian world as a result of the Church marrying paganism and becoming the "world Church" of Roman Catholicism. Then, after twelve centuries of "Dark Ages" had passed by, the time of the Reformation came; and with it, a rediscovering of the truth of salvation by grace through faith. However, with all of this, the Protestant reformation failed to find the lost keys. Later on, a few Christian writers caught a glimpse of them and began writing on that which they saw. These were giants like Govett, Pember, and Panton, who lived from the early nineteenth century through to the beginning of the twentieth century; and Watchman Nee, who lived in the early twentieth century. After these men were gone, however, these truths were again lost for the most part. However, God is raising up men who understand and teach them, and can proclaim these truths to the Church that is facing the imminent return of the Lord Jesus.

This chapter will set forth the meaning of "the keys of three", first in the make-up of man; and secondly, in the salvation of man; and finally in the Kingdom of God. Then in the following chapters, a detailed revelation of all of the truths associated with the "keys of three" will be made.

THE KEYS OF THREE IN THE MAKE-UP OF MAN

The popular teaching today concerning man is that man is composed of body and spirit, with the soul being a part of the spirit. In the study of theology, this view is called the dichotomy (division into two) of man. Seminaries and Bible schools alike teach this view, and because of this they miss the first "key of three" on the road to the deeper knowledge that God wants us all to possess.

The simple truth according to the Bible is that man is a "trichotomy". That is, he is composed of three parts. He has a body, soul, and spirit. Each of these parts has boundaries that can be divided from one another by the Word of God (Heb. 4:12), and *each part must be saved and preserved unto the coming of the Lord in order for man to rule and reign with Jesus Christ:*

1Thessalonians 5:23

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1Thes. 5:23)

The subject of spirit, soul, and body has already been discussed in the previous chapter.

THE KEYS OF THREE IN MAN'S SALVATION

If someone were to ask you if you are saved, as a Christian, you would be correct to answer, "I have been saved; I am being saved; and I will be saved." This answer describes the *three tenses of salvation* and as such, the keys of three in man's salvation. These three tenses of salvation (deliverance) can be clearly seen in the following verses:

2 Corinthians 1:9-10

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered (past tense) us from so great a death, and doth deliver (present continuous tense): in whom we trust that he will yet deliver (future tense) us;

The same Greek word used here for "deliver" (*Greek – rhoumai*) is also used in the following verse:

Colossians 1:13

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Past Tense Salvation – Salvation of the Spirit of Man

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

According to the Greek text, the first part of verse eight could have been also translated "*For by grace through faith you have been saved*". The Holy Spirit had this verse written in the perfect tense (the American Standard Version as well as other translations renders this as such). The perfect tense in the Greek language means that it is a work or act completed in the past, with its finished results extending into the present time. Thus, these two verses of Scripture describe a salvation that was totally accomplished on the Cross by Jesus Christ, and which extends into our present time in a finished state for all those who receive it through faith. This is the salvation of the *spirit*; such salvation saves a man from the *penalty* of his sin.

It is a salvation totally made possible by the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, and to which no one can add thereto by any means or works. Thus there can be no boasting of additional works. When any preacher, teacher, Church or denomination, adds to this finished work a further condition to salvation, no matter how indiscernible this addition may be, then it becomes difficult for anyone who has placed himself and relied entirely on those additional conditions to be saved. In these last days, there has been a host of works added by man. Such works range from the subtle to the ridiculous: repentance, speaking in tongues, baptism, and communion are just a few of many.

Present Tense Salvation – Salvation of the Soul of Man

1 Corinthians 1:18

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

According to the Greek text, the last part of this verse can be translated as follows "...but unto us who are being saved it is the power of God."

With this understanding we are introduced to a new kind of salvation which operates in the *present continuous* tense. Unlike the completed past tense salvation, this salvation reveals to us a present and continuous work (not yet completed) that begins in our lives at the moment our *spirits* are saved and continues in a present tense until it ends at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Scripture describes this final fruition at the Judgment Seat of Christ as the "Salvation of the Soul".

1 Peter 1:9

Receiving the end [goal] of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Notice that the word "end" in the above verse could also be translated as "goal", or "ultimate purpose". Thus the ultimate purpose, or goal, of your faith, or present walk with the Lord (in the context of the preceding verses) is the Salvation of your Soul. Thus is the vital importance of the subject of this book.

Since the words "soul" and "life" in the New Testament are translated from the same Greek word "psuche", this salvation can also be stated as the "salvation of the *life*". Moreover, this *present continuous* Salvation of the Soul has nothing to do with eternal life (life for all the ages), as past tense salvation does; but rather it is the ongoing saving (sanctification) of a believer in order that he may qualify for entrance into the millennial kingdom of Christ (life for *the* age). Not all born-again believers will qualify at the Judgment Seat of Christ to rule and reign with Jesus in His Millennial Reign over the earth.

If a believer lives for himself here (gains his soul), he will lose it there (at the Judgment Seat of Christ). If he loses it here for Christ's sake, he will gain it there, as Jesus stated over and over in several different verses:

Matthew 16:25

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

One who loses his soul at the Judgment Seat of Christ loses his *life*. He will either be given eternal life (life for *the* age) with rewards, or he will lose his life there. He has been raised from the dead to appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ; but he has been raised from the dead in his mortal, flesh and blood body. There is no Scripture that says otherwise. Lazarus was raised to life in his mortal body; and it is apparent from other Scripture that those raised from the dead along with Jesus (Matt. 27:53) were raised in mortal bodies, and later died. Jesus alone has received an immortal, resurrection body that can never die again:

1 Timothy 6:16

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

If a person who has been raised from the dead in his mortal body loses his life at this point, it means he will be put to death again (the hurt of the second death), suffering loss. He will either be chosen to rule and reign with Christ in His coming kingdom and be given a glorified, resurrected body, or be put to death again in his mortal body and thus be excluded from that kingdom. He will either gain great power and ability to produce great works, or he will lose his ability and power to accomplish any future works whatsoever (Matt. 25:28), being put to death again.

Romans 8:13

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die [at the Judgment Seat]: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live [as the Judgment Seat].

Living after the flesh can be compared to saving your life here. But if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body (lose your soul here), you shall live there (be given a resurrected body that can never die again).

Consider Matthew 16:25 quoted above – *whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it*. That this verse concerns eternal life (life for the age; i.e., the millennial age) can be seen in the parallel verse in John where Jesus phrases it slightly differently:

John 12:25

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

Consider these verses carefully; they do not teach what most Bible commentators think. The *losing* and subsequent *finding* of his life is not in this same age. If you lose your life (hate your life) in *this* age (in this world), you will find it (keep it) in the *next* age.

Salvation of the *Soul*, then, is dependent on the type of life a believer chooses to live while on earth. If he allows his old nature to rule his life, he will produce works of wood, hay, and stubble. These will be burned up at the Judgment Seat of Christ, with the result being the loss of his *soul* (life). If, however, through receiving the engrafted Word of God, he permits his new nature (through the Holy Spirit within him) to rule over his life, he will produce works of gold, silver, and precious stones (1Cor. 3:11-15). Since these works cannot be burned up, the result of this testing will be the saving of his *soul*.

Unless one has learned the difference between the new birth (salvation of the spirit) and life for the coming kingdom age (Salvation of the Soul), he will be subject to confusion over many passages of Scripture that speak of these two different salvations.

As an example: whereas, salvation of the spirit is mostly taught in the epistle to the Romans, Salvation of the Soul is taught in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Hebrews, James and First and Second Peter.

There is a vast difference between the two salvations. Consider this:

- (1) Whereas, salvation of the spirit through faith saves man from the *penalty* of sin, the Salvation of the Soul by continuous faithfulness is presently saving the believer from the *power* of sin.
- (2) Whereas, the first offers *life for the eternal ages*; the second offers *life for the coming age*.
- (3) Whereas, the first has already saved the believer into *God's family*, the second is presently saving the faithful believer to qualify for future entrance into the *Kingdom of Heaven*.
- (4) Whereas, the first offers a *gift* which cannot be not worked for, the second offers a *prize* which must be won (Phil. 3:14).

(5) Whereas, the first *cannot* be lost, the second *can* be lost (2John 1:8; Rev. 3:11).

Future Tense Salvation – the Body of Man

Romans 8:22-25

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

We come now to the *future* tense salvation of a believer. This is the salvation of his *body* from the results and the presence of sin, and it will occur at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is the new, immortal body to be given to overcoming Christians at that time. (The very important subject of the Resurrection of the Body will be discussed in great detail in a later chapter in this book.)

In the passage that is before us, we clearly see that this is a *hope* we have in the future. This hope *may* be fulfilled at the Judgment Seat of Christ – but it is not guaranteed for all Christians. It is a reward that *may* be conferred at that time. That is why, in this case, instead of being saved by faith (salvation of the spirit), we are here saved by *hope* - because it has not yet occurred. This hope is a motivating factor for us to continue in obedience to the Lord – ultimately resulting in the Salvation of the Soul.

1 John 3:3

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Romans 8:24

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

The question has been asked many times, why should God raise up the body when man could live in his spirit forever? The answer lies in God's total redemption of man. Since sin puts the body into the grave (Rom. 5:12), God then must redeem the body. If He were to allow it to stay in the grave, then He would suffer defeat to Satan by default. Another reason is that the body is not a *prison* of the spirit and soul, but is part of the very essence of man. After God created Adam, he said in Genesis 1:31, "*And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.*" Therefore, God intended as part of His perfect plan that man should have a body.

Finally, in God's perfect justice, every believer must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ in the very body in which he lived this present life in order to give an account for the deeds done in that body - whether good or bad. In our courts of law, it is proper that a man should appear bodily before his accusers, if at all possible, that he might be judged for the deeds he did in his body.

THE THREE BOOKS OF LIFE

Many Christian teachers err when they attempt to teach about the "*book of life*." Their error comes from a failure to recognize that there are actually three different books of life mentioned in the Scriptures, with each pertaining to one of the three parts of man (body, soul, and spirit). Two of these "books of life" are found in the Old Testament, with the third book being found in the book of Revelation.

The First Book of Life

Psalms 69:28

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living.....

In the first half of this verse in Psalms, we see the first of the three books of life. It is called the "*book of the living*". This is the book in which every person's name is written at the moment of conception, and is blotted out at the moment of death. This is the book of all the living - lost and saved - and pertains only to the *body* of man.

David mentioned this book of life when he spoke of his own conception in Psalm 139:13-16.

Psalms 139:16

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

In the verse 16 he tells us that God wrote his name in this book before his bodily members were formed in the womb of his mother. Here we see that God counts us as individual persons with names at the moment of conception. The Jews recognized this truth by counting all of their children as being one year old at birth.

The Second Book of Life

Psalms 69:28

..... and not be written with the righteous.

The second half of the verse refers to the book of life of the "*righteous*". It contains all the names of those who are saved, and who will be saved (salvation of the spirit.) Here, the names of the saved can only be written, not blotted out (eternal security of the believer). In the New Testament, this book is known as the "*Book of Life*" (depending on the context), and the "*Lamb's Book of Life*" (compare Phi. 4:3, Rev. 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27). It pertains only to the *spirit* of man.

The Third Book of Life

Revelation 3:5

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

This third book of life is found in Revelation. It is a book of the names of all who will rule and reign with Jesus Christ in His Kingdom. Every believer's name will be written in this book, because he is an heir. But if he is disinherited, his name will be blotted out. Where it is impossible for a believer to be blotted out of the book of life that pertains to the salvation of the spirit, it is possible for one to be blotted out of this book, which pertains to the salvation of the soul (rewards). The above verse (Rev. 3:5) teaches that there is a reward for those who *overcome*, and a loss of reward (being blotted out of the book of life) for those who fail to overcome. Thus, this book of life is different from the first two books of life, in that it pertains specifically to the *soul*.

The contextual setting of this verse is found in the letter that was written to the Sardis church. This church represents the new Christian who does not grow in the Word, and confess his sins to God.

Therefore, it becomes a fitting symbol of the average church member in these last days. Those that *"have a name that you are alive, but you are dead"* (Rev 3:1). Saved, but that is about all, as these are saints who are in danger of losing their inheritance by being blotted out of the book of life. Those of this class who fail to overcome will spend their millennial life in the *"outer darkness."*

THE KEYS OF THREE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Probably few people really understand the meaning of the Kingdom of God. A growing number of theologians today believe that the Kingdom of God is a secret kingdom in the hearts of men, and that the Church is the outward manifestation of that kingdom. They further believe that since this kingdom is not literal, then neither is the king. They take all Scriptures that speak of the literal and visible return of Christ and spiritualize them in order to do away with His literal one thousand year reign over the earth. Their view of the kingdom is called the "amillennial" view - i.e., no millennium. Thus, they see the Kingdom of God as only one kingdom – a secret spiritual kingdom.

The Scriptures, however, teach us that the Kingdom of God is expressed in three different aspects – the Kingdom of God the Father, the Kingdom of God the Holy Spirit, and the Kingdom of God the Son. As the Trinity teaches us that God is One and yet Three, so is His kingdom one and yet three different manifestations. We must rightly divide the Scripture to determine to which of these three manifestations is under consideration in any given verse, and we do this through the context, and through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, our ultimate Teacher.

The First Aspect - The Kingdom of God the Father

The Kingdom of God the Father rules over all creation from a literal throne in the third heaven. Daniel 4:34-35 tells us that this kingdom is *"...an everlasting dominion...and all the inhabitants of earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?"* In this kingdom is all that has been created, whether planets, universes, angels, animals, insects, lost or saved men. He rules them all, entirely.

The Second Aspect – The Kingdom of God the Holy Spirit

The Kingdom of God the Holy Spirit rules over the new creation (a believer's heart and life), *but by permission only*. Romans 14:17-19 tells us "the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." The saved man is reminded that he has two ways to live his life. If he allows his soul to dominate his spirit, causing an offense to his Christian brother (attitudes and/or efforts of the flesh), this kingdom will not be operating within him. However, if he allows his spirit to dominate his soul (attitudes and efforts of the spirit) this kingdom will be operating in him. As a result, he will enjoy righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, while being of service to Christ and acceptable to God.

Unlike the Kingdom of God the Father, this kingdom is entered through faith. This happens at the moment one rests in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. At this moment of faith, the Holy Spirit enters into his spirit for the purpose of sealing him forever with the Holy Spirit of Promise, i.e., God's promise of eternal life (Eph. 1:13). This is the experience of being "born-again" that Jesus spoke of in John 3:3.

Once this birth has occurred, it can never be altered, changed or remanded by the actions of the believer. The person having entered this aspect of the Kingdom has a new spirit nature that was born of God, and his position in Christ is secure. This position in Christ is called the eternal security of the believer, since it can never be lost.

The believer who has entered the Kingdom of God the Holy Spirit has the ability to see (perceive, or understand) the third aspect of the Kingdom of God, which is the Kingdom of God the Son (John 3:3).

John 3:3

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

But notice that such a person only has the ability to see the Kingdom of God. In order to *enter* the Kingdom of God, there is an additional requirement of being *born of water*. This distinction between *seeing* and *entering* into the Kingdom of God is uniformly lost by most Bible teachers, being ignorant of Salvation of the Soul.

John 3:5

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

The Third Aspect – The Kingdom of God the Son

This aspect is called the Kingdom of Heaven in the gospel of Matthew. Unfortunately, the believer is not guaranteed that he will enter the Kingdom of God the Son, since entrance into the Kingdom of God the Son carries the additional criterion that one must be "born of water" (John 3:5). "Born of water" means a person must be cleansed and sanctified by the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:25-27). James 1:21 describes this as receiving "with meekness the engrafted word." This simply means that the believer allows the Word of God to infiltrate his life, so that he is gradually changed "from glory to glory" into the image of Jesus Christ. This process is referred to in James as Salvation of the Soul.

James 1:21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Ephesians 5:25-27

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Therefore, the believer who is "born of water *and* the spirit" (John 3:5) will enter into the third aspect of the Kingdom, which is called the Kingdom of God the Son, or the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of God the Son is a visible, literal, corporal and future Kingdom that has boundaries of time and space. The Old Testament describes it as the messianic Kingdom, while the New Testament refers to it as the millennial Kingdom or the Kingdom of Heaven. This Kingdom is future, and Jesus commanded His disciples to pray for its inception (The Lord's Prayer).

Numerous Christians will fail to enter the Kingdom of God the Son because of sin and disobedience. Submission to the control of the Holy Spirit is required in order to enter this aspect of the Kingdom. In the Bible, being filled with the Holy Spirit means to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Believers who enter into this aspect of the Kingdom will enter into the reign and rule of Jesus Christ when He sets up His Kingdom on the earth for the millennium. The phrase "enter the Kingdom" literally means to enter into the king's dominion, and it does not mean to enter into heaven. Not all Christians will "enter the Kingdom", since entrance into this aspect of the Kingdom is a privilege granted only to those believers who have earned rewards. Those believers who lose their rewards will forfeit this privilege.

The Old Testament called it the "messianic kingdom", while the New Testament refers to it as the millennium, "the Kingdom of Heaven" - the rule of Jesus Christ over this earth for one thousand years. This kingdom has been prophesied throughout the Old and New Testaments and is the crowning revelation in the last book of the Bible. Daniel tells us that after it is established, it will never be destroyed - instead, it will break down all other kingdoms (Dan 2:44). He describes its king as the Son of Man (Jesus) coming with the clouds of heaven and all people, nations and languages serving Him (Dan 7:13-14).

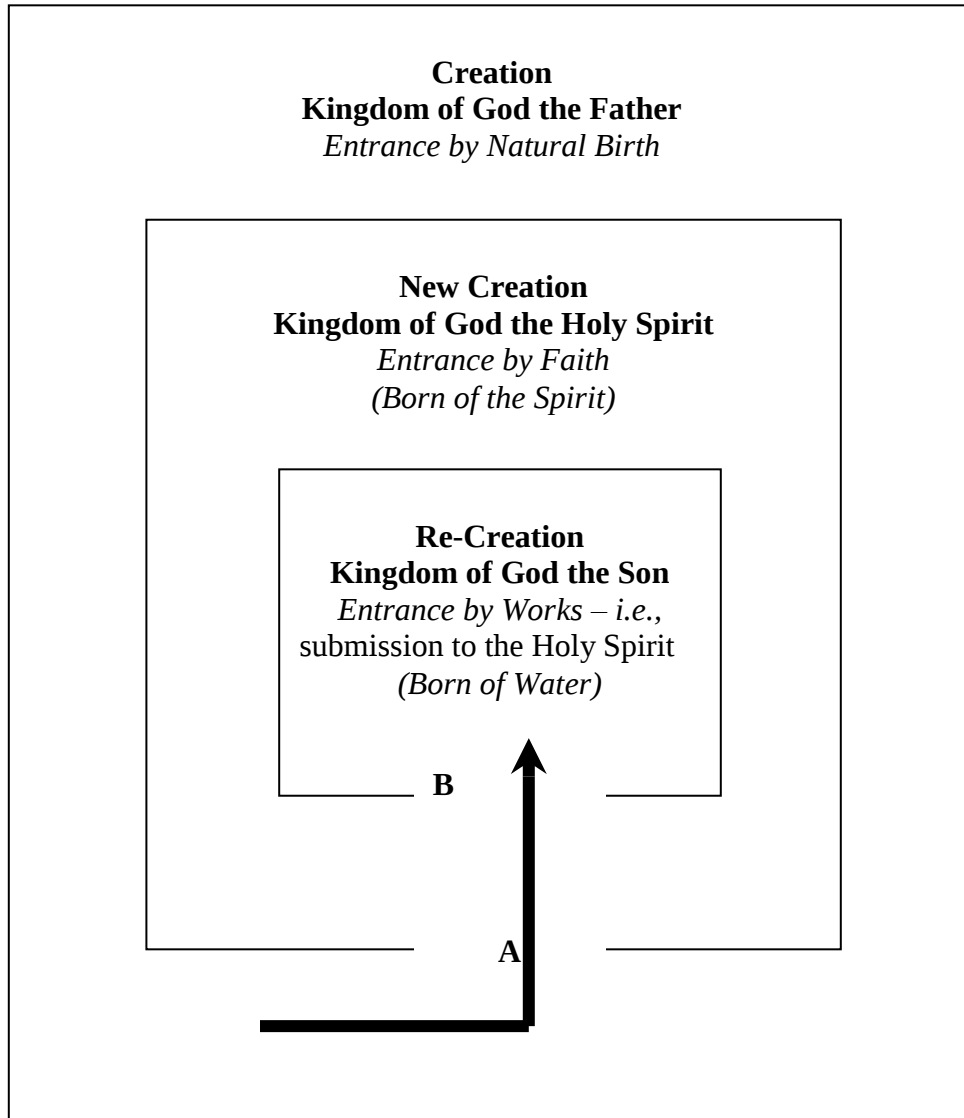
Both Samuel and Isaiah tell us that His literal throne will be called the "Throne of David" (2 Samuel 7:16; Isaiah 9:6-7). The psalmist reveals that He will rule the nations with a "rod of iron" (Psa. 2:2-9), and both Isaiah and Zechariah disclose that His reign will be glorious (Isa. 32:1-4; 15-20; Zech. 14:16-21). As to how long this kingdom on earth will last, John, in the book of Revelation, reveals that it will be for one thousand years. John emphasizes this period of one thousand years no less than six times in a single chapter (Rev. 20).

Then, after the earth is destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:10-12), and the new heaven and earth are created (Isa 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1), Jesus will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and it will be called the "Kingdom of the Father" (1Cor. 15:24-28).

Entrance into the Kingdom of God the Son is by privilege only. This privilege is a reward given at the Judgment Seat of Christ to all believers who have been judged and found qualified (*Salvation of the Soul*). These rewards will be comprised of crowns that will give the recipient the right to rule and reign with Christ from the heavenlies over the cities of the earth during the millennial kingdom of our Lord (Luke 19:17-19). Those that lose the rewards (*he that shall lose his life*) will lose this privilege.

Finally, these three aspects of the Kingdom of God each operate in different spheres. The first is entered by *creation* (birth), the second by the *new-creation* (the new birth), and the third by the *re-creation* (being born of water: rewards; i.e. the first resurrection: this being "born of water" will not occur until the Judgment Seat of Christ.) The average Church today teaches only the second aspect (the new creation). They believe that one needs only to be born again in order to receive all of the rewards, no matter how he conducts his life here on earth. Contrary to this, however, Scripture teaches that all believers who do not produce works that survive the fiery test of Christ will suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1Cor. 3:11-15). It is awesome to contemplate the awful *weeping and gnashing of teeth* that will occur at the Judgment Seat of Christ when these believers finally realize the truth. The chart on the following page may help to visualize these three kingdoms and their relationship to each other.

THE THREE-FOLD KINGDOM OF GOD



In the above diagram, the entrance into the Kingdom of God the Father is by natural birth. Entrance into the Kingdom of God the Holy Spirit (the salvation of the spirit) is through the gate of faith at Gate A. Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven (salvation of the soul) is through the gate of righteous works at Gate B. This is a reward bestowed at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Heirs of Salvation

Hebrews 1:14

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

In the previous chapter we demonstrated the truths concerning the three salvations of man. The purpose of this chapter is to reveal a term found in the book of Hebrews – The Heirs of Salvation. This term encompasses the first *three* salvations plus all of the redeemed creation of the coming millennial earth.

The above Scripture tells us that this is in the *future tense* and can only be entered into through the doorway of inheritance. Contrary to popular teaching, the actual inheritance does not take place when the *spirit* is saved (past tense salvation), but rather at the Judgment Seat of Christ as a result of all three parts of man (body, soul, and spirit) being saved. Thus, men - alive or dead - who possess saved spirits will one day be "caught up" to have their works tested at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those whose works pass the fiery test of God will qualify for Salvation of the Soul (James 1:21 below), and as a result will have a part in the "out-resurrection" (Phil. 3:11), or the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:6), receive rewards, and inherit millennial (age) life. On the other hand, those whose works are burned up will suffer the loss of their life (for 1,000 years), and as a result will lose any rewards or inheritance.

James 1:21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

SOUL SALVATION IN HEBREWS

Contrary to that which many pastors teach, the book of Hebrews, in which the verse concerning *the heirs of salvation* is found, was not written to first century Jews who were lost, but rather to all Christians - in chapter three they are addressed as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1). The purpose of Hebrews is to teach *Salvation of the Soul* and entrance into this millennial life. It could rightly be called a Christian handbook on how to gain admission and thus to rule and reign with Christ in the coming millennial age. Probably not one verse in it is given to show *spirit* salvation. As a matter of fact, it is full of warnings for Christians who are in the process of having their *souls* saved not to fall away and lose their inheritance. In Hebrews 2:3, we are given the biblical title to this salvation. It is called the "Great Salvation".

Hebrews 2:3

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

The "Great Salvation" stands as an enigma to most sincere teachers of the Word. Not knowing the "keys of three", they try to make it mean salvation by grace through faith (salvation of the spirit). But this

cannot be, because *spirit* salvation was first known and preached in the Old Testament. As an example, Adam believed in the promised seed and was saved (Gen 3:15, 20). Also, Abraham and David were saved by grace through faith (Rom. 4:3; 4:6). Contrary to this, the "Great Salvation" was not preached until just two thousand years ago, and the preacher was the Lord Himself. It speaks of "millennial life" (life for the age), not the eternal life (life for all eternity) that most Christians imagine. Its message incorporates the *inheritance*, the *reward* (1Cor. 3:14), and the *prize* to be gained (Phil. 3:14) by all Christians who attain the salvation of their *souls* at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Great Salvation also encompasses all of the truths concerning the coming new world (millennial age). This world will not be ruled over by angels, as is this present world (Satan and his angels), but will be ruled by Jesus Christ and His chosen (Heb. 2:5).

The First Warning

Hebrews 2:1-3

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

As we learn more about this salvation and the privilege that can be ours, God gives us several warnings in the book of Hebrews to not turn our backs on this "Great Salvation". Our above text indicates the first of these warnings. In the above verses, God says:

- (1) We ought to pay more serious attention to all the truths that embody this Great Salvation.
- (2) Don't let them *slip* away (lit., as "a leaking vessel") (vs. 1).
- (3) Don't *neglect* them (which means to not be careless; to not show reckless unconcern).
- (4) Finally, He warns that we shall not escape (the judgments at the Judgment Seat of Christ) if we fail in this. But rather, we will suffer the exact and *just recompense of reward* (Heb. 2:2-3), which literally means receiving exactly what we deserve.

The other warnings of God in the book of Hebrews are discussed in detail in a later chapter.

THE MASTER KEY

The message of the Great Salvation, which comprises the *Salvation of the Soul* and its rewards, becomes a master key that unlocks all spiritual truth concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. The failure of the 21st century Church to see this has rendered it powerless and unable to rightly interpret many Scriptures.

Our Lord first preached this salvation (vs. 3 – "*which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord*"). No one before Him ever knew what it meant. It was called a *mystery* and was kept secret from the foundation of the world (1Cor. 2:7; Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:26). The Old Testament prophets caught a glimpse of it, but did not know of what it consisted, or for whom it was, or what time it would come (1Peter 1:9-12). This salvation was, however, seen in many types in the Old Testament. Likewise, the angels still have a desire

to understand it (1Peter 1:12). Then, after our Lord was crucified, buried, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, He taught this master key primarily to His servant, the Apostle Paul.

Romans 16:25-26

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

Paul, then, is the apostle who wrote chiefly of the Salvation of the Soul and of its rewards – the "Great Salvation". James wrote his entire epistle on that which is necessary for a *soul* to be saved (James 1:21), and Peter taught a portion of it when he gave us the qualifications to enter the kingdom (2Peter 1:4-11). However, even Peter said in his epistle (2Peter 3:15-16) that it was difficult to understand some of Paul's writing concerning these truths (that is, difficult for some – not Peter himself). It was meat and strong meat that could not be understood by carnal Christians, but only by those described below:

Hebrews 5:14

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

The teaching concerning the "Salvation of the Soul", and the "Great Salvation" became so much of a part of Paul's ministry, that he called it *my gospel* (Rom. 2:16; 2Tim. 2:8). (Note: this is not *another* gospel, but is a deeper revelation included in the truth of the *whole* gospel.)

In learning Paul's gospel, one must realize that it first differentiates between two major areas of Scripture. These are the teachings on *eternal life or death* as opposed to *millennial life or death*. Paul wrote about the subject of eternal life or death mainly in the book of Romans. He carefully explained man's lost and depraved condition and the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross that can save him. Then, upon completion of this subject in Romans, he introduced the study of millennial life or death. In later epistles, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, he expanded the teaching of *my gospel* and gave the life-changing details. Like jewels scattered across the surface of the ground for anyone to see, so are these truths scattered throughout the epistles of Paul. In the latter few centuries of the Church Age, few have ever seen them. But in the coming chapters of this book, these jewels will be revealed to you, if you will receive it.

This would be a good place to point out that these are not new truths previously unknown to the Church; these truths were taught by many of the early Church fathers, and they have been taught by a remnant throughout the Church age up until now. But for the most part, due to the work of the leaven (Matt. 13:33), they have been buried under the dust of traditional doctrine.

CHAPTER FIVE

Adoption - Redemption - Inheritance

Romans 8:22-23

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

In this chapter we will examine three major truths that are necessary to understand in order to help one to strive to qualify as an Heir of Salvation. They are *redemption* of the body, *adoption*, and the *inheritance*. For purposes of clarity, I will present the doctrine of adoption first, and then the redemption of the body. As we study these truths it will become clear to the believer that there are two types of adoption referred to in Scripture – one pertaining to Salvation of the Spirit, and the other pertaining to Salvation of the Soul. In addition, there are two kinds of an inheritance due to believers – one for all believers, and another only for the firstborn sons (the overcomers). However, the latter inheritance is not an automatic entitlement when one first believes in Jesus Christ as his Savior.

That Which Pertains to All Believers

All believers have been adopted into the family of God:

Ephesians 1:5

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Galatians 3:26

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:15-16

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Colossians 1:13

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

There is an inheritance in which all believers partake:

Romans 8:17

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God....

Acts 26:18

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Ephesians 1:11-14

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

All Christians have an inheritance from God, and all will receive this inheritance referred to above. In the context above, this portion of the inheritance is a glorified, immortal body like unto the one Christ now possesses ("the redemption of the purchased possession"). The "firstborn sons" will receive theirs at the beginning of the millennium, and will accordingly rule and reign with Christ for 1,000 years. The rest will receive their inheritance also, but not until after the millennium. They will not be among the "firstborn sons". All are sons of God; but not all are "firstborn" sons – the firstborn receive the double portion of the inheritance, and these are those who will rule over God's house. But ultimately, in the eternal ages to come, all believers will be to the praise of His glory, because He has decreed this beforehand.

All Christians are heirs of God:

Romans 8:17

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God,

But being joint-heirs with Christ (and also being glorified with Him [i.e., receiving our glorified, immortal bodies]) is conditioned upon whether we suffer with Him:

and joint-heirs with Christ; IF so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

And only the firstborn sons (the joint-heirs described above) participate in the first resurrection (being glorified together):

Revelation 20:4

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Revelation 20:5

But the rest of the dead (the rest of those born again) lived not again [did not receive their glorified, resurrection bodies] until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

The "rest of the dead" described above receive their glorified, immortal resurrection bodies at the *second (last) resurrection* which occurs at the end of the 1,000 year rule. By careful study of vs. 20:4 preceding, you can see that "lived" refers to those born again martyrs who "lived" and ruled with Christ for 1,000 years. The term "lived" in this context means receiving a glorified, resurrection body. The lost never live again in this sense; the lost do not receive a resurrection body. It is true the lost will be raised from the dead to appear before the Great White Throne judgment at the end of the millennial reign, but they appear in flesh and blood mortal bodies that die again at the Second Death.

In Biblical times, all the sons of the father received an inheritance. But the firstborn son received a double portion, which included (1) rulership of the family, (2) the priesthood of the family, and (3) a double portion of the riches. Likewise, so shall it be in the family of God. But not all the children of God are firstborn sons. The remainder of this section will concern the adoption, redemption, and inheritance as it pertains to the firstborn sons of God.

That Which Pertains Only to Firstborn Sons

As a result of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden, he suffered death (spiritual then and the body later), and all of creation was marred. The rulership that God had promised man over the earth was lost to man. Instead, the incumbent ruler that man was intended to replace – Satan – retained his rulership, and evil entered into the restored world and the world systems. Since that time, all of creation, including man himself, has groaned in continuous pain waiting for this curse of sin to be lifted and for that day when man would be *adopted* and become the "sons of God" (or even more properly, *firstborn* Sons of God):

Romans 8:19-23

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.(Rom. 8:19-23)

In our text, "adoption" is connected to the "redemption of the body". The words "to wit" are not in the original Greek. The "to wit" was added by the translators to make it clear that this is not the general adoption of all of God's children, but that this is a special adoption – that of the firstborn sons. The adoption and redemption of the body referred to here will take place at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and is conditioned upon having been found *worthy* of Salvation of the Soul.

The redemption of the body is when our mortal body puts on immortality. It is the receiving of a glorified body like unto the glorified body of Jesus.

Philippians 3:21

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

This is the "out-resurrection from the dead" referred to by Paul in Philippians; note that in context this resurrection is not guaranteed, but is something Paul strived to receive:

Philippians 3:11

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

This is the "first resurrection" referred to in Revelation:

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The word adoption in the context here means, "Placing one as a firstborn son". Contrary to current popular theology, one is not placed as a *firstborn* son at the moment of salvation. To understand why, one must first understand Eastern culture concerning adoption, as opposed to that of the West. In the West, adoption means taking someone else's natural child and legally "placing him as your own son". In the East, it means taking your own natural child and "placing him as your son". In the West, a child can become a son the moment you adopt him no matter what his age may be. In the East (the Jewish culture), your own child cannot become a son until his thirteenth birthday. The Jews call this the "bar mitzvah". In the West a child can inherit his father's property at any age. In the East, he must first be placed as a son at his bar mitzvah. Since the Scriptures always use patterns of truth connected to Israel in order to teach the truths of the New Testament, there must be a "*heavenly bar mitzvah*" at the Judgment Seat of Christ in order to be *adopted* as "firstborn sons of God." We get a further understanding of this in the book of Galatians.

Galatians 4:1-5

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; ² But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. ³ Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: ⁴ But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁵ To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Here, the Apostle Paul tells us that a child born into a family is no different in position than a servant of that family when it comes to rights and privileges, even though he has been born an heir (verse 1). He must grow under tutors and governors (teachers) until the appointed time of being placed as a son (verse 2). Likewise, all who are elected to sonship must first be born again (redeemed from the law) and have the opportunity to grow in the Word under the direction of the Holy Spirit (tutors and governors) with a view to becoming (at a future date) adopted as sons (verse 5). Don't overlook the conditional verb "might". The verse doesn't say we "will"; it says we "might".

In principle, all who have been born again are sons. But that sonship has not yet been *manifested*, and cannot be until the body is *redeemed*. Until that occurs, Scripture refers to all believers, except in a few cases, as "children of God". This is in opposition to many translations of Scripture, which translate "children of God" as "sons of God". The translators, not perceiving the difference, used these expressions interchangeably. For instance, in John 1:12, (KJV) we read, "*But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God...*" The Greek text here, however, renders the word sons (Huios) in this verse as children (teknon).

It is an interesting observation that God does not use the word "son" (Gr. "huios") in the New Testament except in connection with Christians who are striving to have their *souls* saved - those who are being *led* by the Holy Spirit; those who are living a life *separated* from the world (Rom. 1:14; 2Cor. 6:17-18); those who are experiencing a father-son relationship. But, as to one being "placed as a son" (gr. "huiothesis") - this cannot occur until we reach the heavenly "bar mitzvah" at the redemption of the body.

The question may be asked, "Why does one have to strive to become a *firstborn* son while growing up under his tutor (the Holy Spirit)? Isn't he automatically placed as a son when he arrives at the Judgment Seat?" The answer is "no". The Scripture teaches that only those children of God who present a saved *soul* (qualify for Salvation of the Soul) will be *placed* as firstborn sons, i.e., "the Church of the Firstborn" (Heb. 12:23), and only these will receive the inheritance. This inheritance will be manifested in the "out-resurrection" (a higher resurrection at the Judgment Seat of Christ out from among those who have been raised from the dead or raptured [Phil. 3:11]). Those who fail to qualify for salvation of the soul at the Judgment Seat of Christ, resulting in the loss of all rewards, *will not inherit the kingdom*, and will only be called the sons of God. Also, since they will not be a member of the "firstborn sons", they will not share in the first resurrection.

Considering all that has been included in this section, our summary thoughts are as follows: All believers will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ having flesh and blood bodies either raised from the dead or raptured while living. However, only those believers that have died to this world in this life and brought forth fruit (Salvation of the Soul) will experience the out-resurrection into glorified bodies, and as such, will be placed as *firstborn* sons. Those remaining sons, whose souls did not die to this world in this present age, will suffer loss during the millennial kingdom age, and this body, having been raised from the dead (as an earthly flesh and blood body), will once again die (the hurt of the second death) and return to the grave. Then, after the millennium, they will experience the second (last) resurrection into glorified spiritual bodies for the eternal ages. The resurrection into glorified bodies is an inheritance due to all believers; but it is a matter of *when* they will receive it – at the beginning, or at the end of the millennium.

The Inheritance

This is the third major truth necessary for the believer to experience in order to enter into the "Great Salvation". The first is the redemption of the body, the second is the adoption, and the third is the *inheritance*. In order to teach this third truth, we must make our beginning at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

In this verse of Scripture we learn we must individually stand before our Lord in our earthly bodies (not yet glorified) and give an account for all the works that we produced in that body while on earth, whether they be good works or bad works. It is here that we will receive the "just recompense of reward" (Heb. 2:2) (meaning to receive exactly what we deserve). This is the gaining of a reward or the suffering of loss (1Cor. 3:14-15).

That this particular inheritance is a reward, and not the automatic due of all believers, can be seen here:

Colossians 3:24

Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

The following is a possible order of events leading up to the full inheritance. First, the rapture or raising from the dead to the Judgment Seat. Secondly, the testing of works of all the redeemed in the all consuming fire of God (1Cor. 3:13). Thirdly, the choosing of the firstborn sons through the out-resurrection into a glorified body and the inheritance. Finally, the suffering of loss for all of the remaining sons of God for a thousand years.

The out-resurrection of the Church of the Firstborn will be the result of having their *souls* saved (1Peter 1:9; James 1:21; Heb. 10:39), receiving the *prize* (Phil. 3:13-14) and becoming *joint-heirs* with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

A Christian cannot receive his inheritance unless he has a glorified, flesh and bone body. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, all appear in their flesh and blood bodies they lived in on earth. At the time of the "out-resurrection" those approved will receive flesh and bone bodies like unto Jesus:

Luke 24:39

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

Only flesh and bones, like unto Jesus, can inherit the Kingdom of God. Flesh and blood cannot inherit:

1 Corinthians 15:50

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Becoming Joint-heirs Is Conditional

Romans 8:16-17

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; IF so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

It is often taught erroneously that becoming a joint-heir with Christ is automatic when one is saved (spirit salvation). While the verses before us do teach that we become *heirs of God* at the moment of salvation, they do not teach that *joint-heirship with Christ* is automatically given at the new birth. Rather, it states clearly that joint-heirship is awarded to a believer on the basis of the *condition* of suffering with Christ in the present life, so that he may be glorified together with Him in His coming kingdom. This "suffering" comes as a result of "losing the life" here (another term being "taking up the cross".)

To rightly understand the doctrine of the inheritance, you must first understand *sonship*. In the previous section, we learned that a Jewish child cannot inherit his father's possessions even though he is an heir. He must first grow into maturity and appear at his bar mitzvah in order to be placed as a son. The same is true with the believer. He is born into the family of God, and as such is an heir of his Father. But in order to inherit, he must first appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ to be "placed as a firstborn son" (adopted). Once he becomes a firstborn son, he can become a joint-heir with Christ and inherit all things with Him.

However, there is a condition that he must have met first. That condition is to have *suffered with Christ* in this life.

In order to do this (suffer), one must *lose* his life (soul) here (yield it to Christ) in order to gain it there in the millennial kingdom. This suffering with Christ is the continual attack of the world, the flesh, and Satan on the believer because of Christ. It is the result of the believer who is willing to lose his life (soul) *here*, in order to gain it *there* in the millennial kingdom (Matt. 16:24-26). This suffering is also an agent which God uses in order to affect the "maturing of the faith", which comes by hearing and doing the Word of God (James 1:22). Again, this suffering is indicative of those who are "having their souls saved" in preparation of becoming glorified together with Christ (becoming *firstborn* sons).

Those that stand before the Judgment Seat adjudicated to have "lost souls", though they are heirs of their Father, will be *disinherited* from being a joint-heir with His Son, suffer loss, and not be glorified with Him during His thousand year reign.

The Rights of the Firstborn

Hebrews 12:22-23

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ To the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

In this section of Hebrews, we must first identify the Church of the Firstborn before we can discuss their rights. In the two verses of Scripture before us, God gives us a glimpse of "the mountain in heaven". Since this mountain is compared with a literal mountain, i.e., Mt. Zion (Heb. 12:18-21), then it and all that is seen on it, may be taken literally.

Now the context plainly shows that Paul was setting before his readers the fact that the old dispensation - with the law delivered from the mount amidst such dreadful manifestations of divine majesty - was no more; and that the Gospel dispensation was that to which they were then called; and he contrasts the forbidding nature of the one with the glory and benignity of the other.

Now the actual *physical* manifestation of this scene will be yet in the future, at the time of Christ's return; however, the saved now possess that *legal* standing before God:

Ephesians 2:6

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

Please notice these different groups:

1. God the Judge of all
2. Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant
3. An innumerable company of angels – the general assembly
4. The Church of the First-born (whose names are "written in heaven")
5. The spirits of just men made perfect

(1) The angels are mentioned in order that we may see them as a distinct group. The English versions of the Bible do not rightly divide the clauses here. Commenting on this Dean Alford remarks that "it is difficult to see why the coupling of clause to clause by 'and' (kai) which prevails through the sentence, should be broken through"; and Darby says, "The words 'and' (kai) give the division very clearly here", and he translated it thus: "and to myriad of angels, the universal gathering"; while Alford seeks to give the full force of the words by rendering, "and to myriads, the festal hosts of angels" We may therefore read the clause thus: "Ye have come unto myriads of angels, the universal festal gathering".

(2) Those called "spirits of just men made perfect" are all the spirits of all who have been "born-again" throughout the ages. Only their "spirits" are seen here. Their spirits are described as "perfect", but the whole *person* has not yet been made perfect (body, soul, and spirit); that has not yet happened as it is written:

Heb 11:40

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

(3) "The Church of the Firstborn" *at this point* comprises a list (whose names are written) of all who have died in Christ. *All* born-again saints have the *opportunity* to attain Salvation of the Soul at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Thus, they have all been recorded in the Church of the Firstborn *at this point*. However, at the Judgment Seat, those disqualified will be removed from this list – their names will be "blotted out" of this written list, referred to elsewhere as the Book of Life. This pertains to salvation of the soul only, and does not pertain to salvation of the spirit.

Revelation 3:5

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Only the *overcomers*, based on having attained the reward of Salvation of the Soul at the Judgment Seat of Christ, will be "chosen" and "out-resurrected" from all those in the whole Body of Christ raised from the dead. This group will be described in further detail in this section. Only their spirits are there; at this point they have no resurrection bodies. Those disqualified at the Judgment Seat will be "blotted out" of this list.

Thus, the names all of us who have been born again were already entered into this Book of Life, consisting of a written list of all the Church of the Firstborn, from the foundation of the world. But those disqualified will be removed, or "blotted out" from this list.

That the Judgment Seat of Christ is at the second coming of the Lord, and that at such judgment it will be determined who will and who will not enter the Kingdom is seen clearly in the Parable of the Talents and elsewhere:

Matthew 25:19, 21

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them...²¹ His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

2 Timothy 4:1

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

The "long time" has been nearly two thousand years now. That He makes the servant "ruler over many things" shows that the Kingdom of Heaven is the context here. (These Parables of the Kingdom will be discussed in a later chapter in greater detail.)

To better understand the teaching of the rights of the firstborn, we need to return to the Old Testament and study their types. These are patterns and prefigured emblems of the "firstborn" (or primogeniture).

(1) Abraham's Firstborn

Genesis 17:16-19

And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.¹⁷ Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? ¹⁸ And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! ¹⁹ And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

In studying Abraham's firstborn, we learn that one cannot even be considered as an heir if he is born under bondage. In Genesis 16:15 we learn that Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid of Sarai, gave birth to Abram's first son who was named Ishmael. This was brought to pass as a result of the interference of Sarai, Abram's wife, since she believed that she herself was beyond childbearing years. In Chapter 17, when Ishmael became thirteen years of age (the age of adoption), God appeared unto Abram and confirmed the covenant and the promise that He would give them a child (vs. 2-13). In verse 18, Abram presented Ishmael to God as his heir, but God rejected him, telling Abram that He would give him a son who would be his heir. The firstborn of Abraham and Sarah was born when both parents were beyond the age of producing children. God deliberately waited until Abraham and Sarah were forced to cease from their own efforts in trying to help God. Because of their old age, all they could do was put their faith in God's Word that He would do the necessary work supernaturally in order for Isaac to be born.

It is the same with the Christian. God will not accept our self-efforts (we are to repent from dead works – Heb. 6:1; 9:14) in trying to produce that which will enable us to inherit the promises. Like Abraham, He wants us to cease from self-efforts (let the soul die here in this life) and trust in Him totally for all things. Then, through the continuous work of the implanted Word in our saved spirits, He will cause the Ishmael of our old nature to die, and the Isaac of our spirits to live. Remember, only Isaac can be the heir.

Galatians 4:21-31

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? ²² For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. ²⁴ Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

²⁵ For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. ²⁶ But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us

all. 27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

In the Galatians passage quoted above, God gives us a deeper look into this type. Here the Apostle Paul is showing us the difference between law and grace, as well as the fruits of both. Please read this section of Scripture carefully and consider these five points:

1. As the bondwoman, Agar (Hagar) represents the law, or that which was received by Israel at Mt. Sinai...so the freewoman, (Sarah) represents grace, or that which is free and received from above.
2. As the fruit of the bondwoman (law) is by the flesh (old nature which resides in the soul)...so is the fruit of the freewoman (grace) by the Spirit (new nature which resides in the spirit).
3. As the flesh represents the old nature of a believer, or the live *soul* that can rule over his redeemed *spirit*...so the Spirit of promise represents the new nature of the believer, which can rule over the unredeemed soul.
4. As the flesh is desirous in producing rewards in this life by self-works...so the redeemed spirit is desirous of producing rewards in the life to come by the works of the Holy Spirit through him.
5. As the flesh boasts of much fruit that the redeemed spirit does not have...so the redeemed spirit rejoices in the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will produce fruit through the Christian that pleases Him.

To conclude our thoughts on Isaac vs. Ishmael, God tells the believer that he has both of these natures residing in him. If he allows Ishmael to rule his life here, he will lose his life there (be disinherited in the kingdom). On the other hand, if he puts to death the Ishmael in his life here (i.e., loses his life here), he will gain it there in the kingdom (inherit the promise).

(2) Isaac's Firstborn

Genesis 25:31-34

And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. 32 And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? 33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.

Isaac and Rebecca had twin boys named Jacob and Esau. Esau was the firstborn, and as such had the right to his father's inheritance. However, he had no interest in his birthright and sold it to his brother for a mess of pottage; this caused him to lose his family inheritance.

Hebrews 12:16-17

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

The writer of Hebrews uses this same story of Esau from the Old Testament in order to warn the Church not to live the life of Esau, else the same thing will happen to them at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Please read this portion of Hebrews carefully, and remember according to 1 Cor 10: *"all these things happened unto them for ensamples [types]; and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the age are come"* (1 Cor 10:11). In other words, this is an Old Testament type (pattern) of a believer losing his inheritance in the coming Kingdom, and God wants us to look at it closely and to consider it seriously!

The message in this type is this: The worldly or carnal Christian, who goes after the trinkets of this world in order to satisfy his *unredeemed soul*, is selling his birthright. The Christian who has no interest or desire for the "Great Salvation" that is coming on the earth and has no interest in the possible position that he could have in it will subsequently lose his inheritance in the millennial kingdom. In these last days, the Christian Church is demonstrating a complete lack of interest in the deep things of God's Word, and at the same time is going after riches and power in this present life that only satisfies their *live souls* (their "Ishmaels", or old natures). Their thoughts are that they are saved and going to heaven, and that there is no need for any other spiritual concerns. These are "Esau" Christians that will find no place for repentance (i.e., no changing of the mind of the *Lord*) at the Judgment Seat of Christ (vs. 17). Like Esau, they will have despised and sold their birthrights to an inheritance worth untold eternal riches...and all for just a few pennies. Oh! The tears that will be shed at the Judgment Seat (vs. 17)...but to no avail!

(3). Jacob's Firstborn

Jacob's firstborn was Reuben, who also lost his inheritance. In this type of the firstborn, God will not only show us the loss of the inheritance, but also of what the inheritance is comprised.

In Genesis 35:22, Reuben sinned against his father by lying with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and as a result he lost his inheritance. Later on in God's Word we learn that the inheritance normally given to the firstborn is in three parts. These are:

1. The kingship of the family.
2. The priesthood of the family.
3. The double portion of all property.

These three are identified when Jacob took the inheritance from Reuben and divided it up into three parts, giving it to three of his other sons:

1. Judah received the kingship of the family.
2. Levi received the priesthood.
3. Joseph's own two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (who were adopted by Jacob) received the double portion of property.

The double portion means giving twice as much to the firstborn son as the others sons received. To explain this, all of Jacob's property was divided into thirteen parts. His eleven sons each received one part each with a double portion going to Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. This is a type of the heavenly adoption. Jacob could not give an inheritance (double portion) to his grandsons. Instead, he had to first adopt them as his own firstborn sons (Gen 48:5; Heb. 11:21). So likewise, there must be heavenly adoption of the sons of God into the firstborn sons of God at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

In the same fashion, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, those sons of God who will have their souls saved and participate in the "out-resurrection" (the *few who are chosen*) from all the *called* (the *many* - all New Testament saints) will become *joint-heirs* with Christ and receive a glorified body along with the position of kings and priests over this earth (Rev. 5:9-10), as well as a double portion of riches.

Matthew 22:14

For many are called, but few are chosen.

Those who lose the inheritance (the *many*) will gain a small blessing, but will not be able to receive it until the *end* of the kingdom age. Those sons of God who gain the inheritance will be called the "Church of the Firstborn", the "*chosen*", and the "out-called". All those sons (the *many*) from whom the firstborn sons will be out-resurrected at the Judgment Seat are *presently* known as the Body of Christ.

(4). Jesus, the Firstborn of Creation and of the Dead

Colossians 1:15-18

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

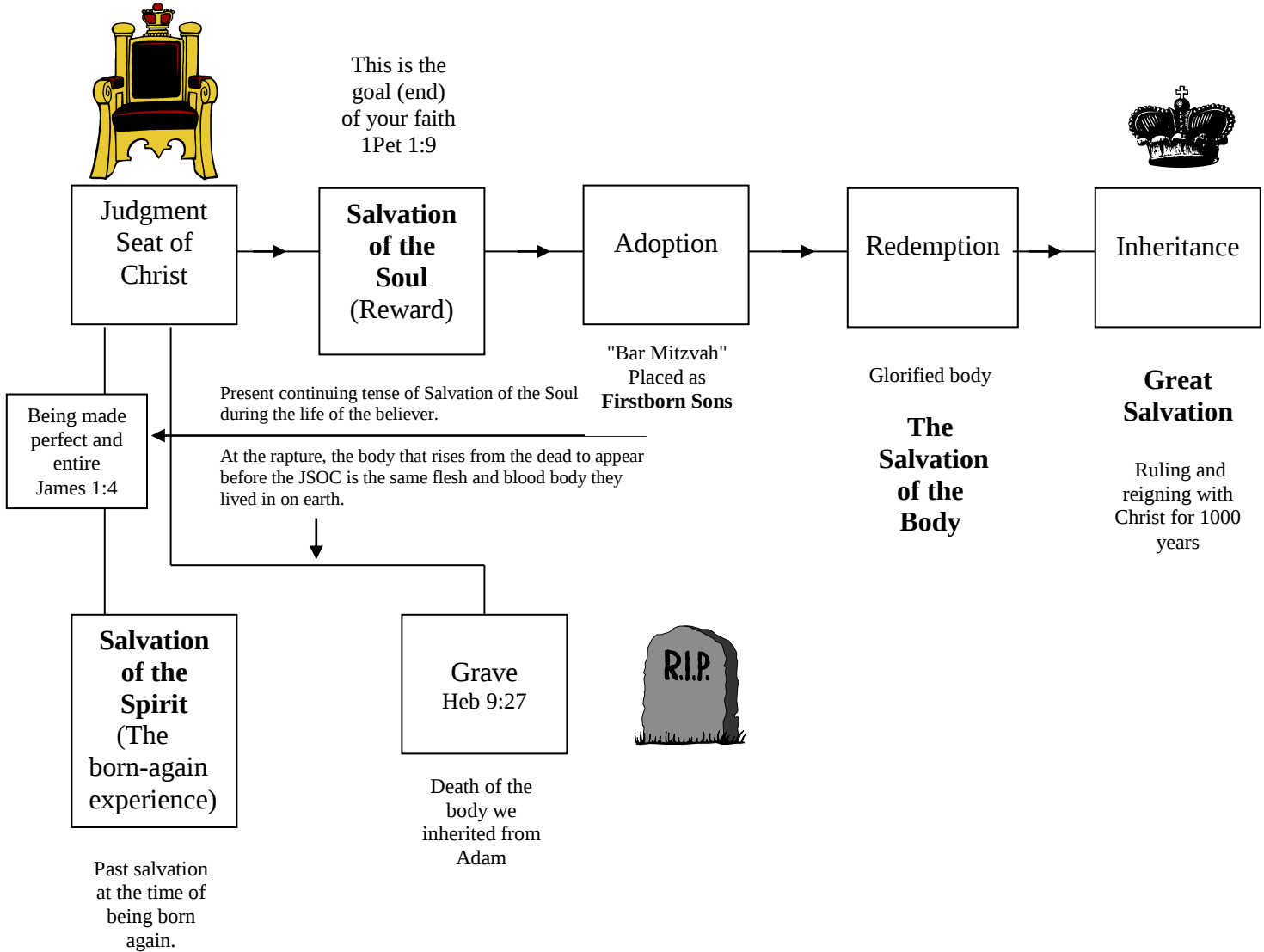
In the above verses, God tells us that Jesus is the "firstborn of every creature (i.e., the firstborn over all creation)". This does not say that he was created, as some cults teach. The meaning is that He has been appointed by God as His Firstborn Son; only the Firstborn Son can rule over all creation.

In Colossians 1:18 we are told that He is the "firstborn from the dead" that He may have the preeminence in all things. Others that were before Him had been raised to mortal life (subject to dying again), but no one had ever been raised into a glorified spiritual body such as Jesus had when He was raised from the dead – never to die again. Jesus was the firstfruits of the resurrection, and as such, was the first to receive a resurrected, glorified body.

Taking into consideration these two truths that point to Jesus as the firstborn, we can better understand the title that will be given to all those who will gain the inheritance - that of the "Church of the Firstborn".

The Inheritance of the Firstborn

May your whole **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
1Thes. 5:23.



CHAPTER SIX

How the Soul is Saved

In this chapter I will present an even closer look at the Salvation of the Soul. The emphasis will be placed on the method that God uses in effecting this *present continuous tense* salvation.

Milk, Meat, and Strong Meat

1 Corinthians 3:1-2

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. ² I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

It is clear in these two verses that the Apostle Paul divides all believers into two major groups in accordance to their spiritual growth. These are the "carnal man" and the "spiritual man". Also, he describes the spiritual diet that each group is able to assimilate (milk or meat). The above verse describes the Corinthian Church as mostly *carnal* (Gr. fleshly), and as such, unable to feed on *meat*. All that Paul could do was to give them *milk*.

Milk in the Scriptures is emblematic of those Bible truths that are connected to the *Cross* and the first coming of Jesus Christ. Sad as it is, the Corinthian Church is a type of most of the Christian world today where only "milk" type messages are being preached from the pulpits. Their diet from Sunday to Sunday is an invitation for the Church member to be saved, when in most cases they already are saved. Few, if any, of the pastors know anything beyond milk doctrines themselves, and as such, they are unable to help their flock to grow beyond spiritual babyhood. As a result, their Churches are full of baby Christians who are content with *milk* and are wrapped up in the programs of man that constantly cause envy, strife, and divisions (1Cor. 3:3).

In these two verses of Scripture, however, Paul also mentions the *meat* of the Word. Meat in the Scriptures is a term that portrays those Bible truths that are connected to the *crown* (rewards) and the second coming of Christ, and is often referred to as "wisdom" (James 1:5). Only those Christians who are spiritually maturing can be fed with this diet. In the Corinthian Church, there were only a few who qualified for this diet. Paul makes mention of this in 2:6, when he wrote "*Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect* (lit. 'mature')". Notice that these words were written *after* he spoke to the main group. For in verse 2 he addresses the majority of the Church saying that "*I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified*". We often hear this verse expounded upon as though Paul were committed to teaching nothing but things about Jesus, when in fact he was mildly rebuking this group for their inability to assimilate anything but milk. He was saying, "I will preach nothing to you except *milk* doctrines, since that's all you can handle."

Now, let us consider another diet of spiritual truth called *strong meat*. Paul described such to the Corinthians as "*a mystery...even the hidden wisdom*". It is found in Heb. 5:14 and is declared to belong only to Christians who are of "full age" - those who are fully matured spiritual adults. Few Christians, indeed, have ever been able to understand "strong meat". Strong meat in the Scripture basically means

spiritual meat that lasts. This diet causes a life to continue in faith, without falling away, unto the end. Its teachings are, among other things, that of the Salvation of the Soul, the out-resurrection, the inheritance, the prize, the great salvation, and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:10). However, in order for a believer to be able to assimilate a diet that grows into strong meat, he must first have a strong desire to have his soul saved.

Lest we make the error of calling the carnal members of the Corinthian Church lost, the Apostle Paul makes one more division that separates the lost from the saved. In 1Cor. 2:14, he calls the lost man the "natural man". We know this man is lost, since it is *impossible* for him to know the things of the Spirit of God; you cannot say that about a born-again Christian who has the Holy Spirit residing in him.

1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The way of salvation begins when a "natural man" is saved through faith. At this stage, his only desire is to feed on *milk* (carnal state). Then as he begins to grow, he will come to desire and feed on the meat of the Word (spiritual man). Finally, he may grow to desire and to feed on "strong meat". This will cause him to grow to the phase known as "of full age". Through this process of growth he will experience the progressive saving of his *soul* (Matt. 16:24-28).

There are three direct statements in the New Testament that refer to "the Salvation of the Soul". The first shows us how we can have it saved; the second shows where it is saved; and the third is a picture of the consequences if it is not saved.

How the Soul Is Saved

James 1:21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

In James 1:1-20, God gives specific instructions to all believers who are interested in having their *soul* saved. Then in verse 21, He sums it all up by giving two commands that are "*able to save your souls*".

This portion of the book of James teaches us how a believer should grow from a spiritual *milk* diet and then on to a *strong meat* diet. In verse four, God tells us that the Salvation of the Soul is based on the matured faith of the believer. It is a faith that has matured by overcoming the trials of this world, and by learning patience. Therefore, the one who presents a matured faith at the coming Judgment Seat of Christ will be the same one who, in this life on earth, grows to be "*perfect [lit. 'mature'] and entire, wanting nothing*" (verse 4).

The process of this growth into mature faith is through the obedience to God's command to "*lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your soul*" (vs. 21). The word "filthiness" in the Greek as used here means "moral defilement", and the words "superfluity of naughtiness" means "super-abundance of wickedness" (this describes a believer under the control of his soul, i.e., the seat of his old nature). Therefore, God is saying in this verse that we must divorce ourselves from these things and open our "spiritual ears" and "*receive with meekness the engrafted word*" [of God]- implanted into you as you continually study and meditate in His Word. This

engrafted or implanted Word (i.e. the power of the Holy Spirit received through the Word of God) will cause you to grow from a milk diet to a meat diet, and through this process, save your *soul*. And how do we "receive with meekness" this implanted word? To "receive with meekness" means to wholly and humbly submit to God's Word – both as it is written, and as God reveals it to us personally. This "receiving with meekness" is worded slightly differently elsewhere in James, where He tells us:

James 1:22

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

"Receiving with meekness" means in humility putting away our own preconceived doctrines which we cling to in our pride, and allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth.

In Romans 12:2, God tells us more about this powerful implanted Word when He says:

Romans 12:2

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

There are two Greek words that are used in this verse of Scripture that tells us how God saves the soul. These words are "conformed" and "transformed", and they come in the form of a negative and positive command.

The Greek word for conformed is "suschematizo", which means to shape or fashion one thing like another. The force of this word tells us not to blueprint or lay out our lives in accordance to this present world. This means you should not allow those of the world to influence you, or outline your life for you, or let them become your peers in order to mold or fashion you into what they are. It even means to not allow worldly (carnal) Christians or Churches to compress you into their own mold of fleshly desires, programs, and goals.

For the second word, which is "transformed", the Greek is "metamorphoo". This word is the positive command and means to "transform or transfigure *inwardly*". Here, God is commanding us to be changed *inwardly* and *automatically* by having our minds renewed. And how is this accomplished? The Apostle Paul in Colossians 3:10 tells us that our "new man" is continually renewed in the "knowledge" (Gr. 'epignosis', or meat doctrines) after the image of the One whom created us. This means that you do not change yourself, but instead rely on the *meat* doctrines of the Word to do this for you. As you feed on them, they will *automatically* and *continuously* transform you from *within*, and as a result, save your *soul*.

There is still another verse of Scripture that helps us understand this automatic change.

2 Corinthians 2:18

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

In this verse the glass (or mirror) is the Word of God, reflecting the glory of the Lord. As we behold this in the reflected Word of God with an open face (continued look), we are *automatically and continuously* changed into the same image of the Lord from glory to glory (the saving of the soul) by the Holy Spirit.

Being Not Conformed to This World, or Dying to Self

Matthew 16:24-27

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. ²⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. ²⁶ For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Thousands of sermons have been and are still being preached on how to be saved (salvation of the spirit) using this passage as a text. Those preaching them have never heard of the "three tenses of salvation", and have no idea of anything beyond initial salvation (salvation of the spirit). This passage, however, does not speak of the salvation of the *spirit*, but rather the Salvation of the Soul. According to verse 27, it is in the context of "rewards", not salvation. In this verse Jesus speaks of returning in glory and rewarding those who lost their lives (souls) for His sake in this present world. This passage then teaches that in order for a Christian to gain rewards at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus. Three things – *deny, cause to die, and follow*. This cannot be said to be the way of salvation of the spirit because that salvation is not of works, lest anyone should boast (Eph. 2:8-9). But it is the way to the "Salvation of the Soul", and this way calls for one who is already saved to die to self.

There are two different lifestyles that can be lived by a Christian. One is a *carnal* lifestyle, and the other a *spiritual* lifestyle. The carnal lifestyle identifies any Christian who rejects the idea of having his *soul* saved, and lives a worldly life while being satisfied with just being saved. His interests lie in this worldly experience together with the power, wealth, and popularity that the world offers. In this lifestyle, his unredeemed *soul*, which is "self" conscious, dominates the saved *spirit*.

On the other hand, one who accepts the invitation to have his *soul* saved will strive to live a spiritual life, not being satisfied with just being saved. His interests will be in the coming kingdom and the power, wealth, and glory that can be his. In this lifestyle, his saved *spirit*, which is "God conscious", will dominate his not-as-yet-saved *soul*. According to verse 24, a Christian cannot even follow Jesus until he first "denies" his soul of enjoyment of the rewards of this world, and allows his soul to die by willingly taking up and carrying his own cross (instrument of execution of this world). Verse 25 bears this out by telling us that if a believer saves his life here, he will lose it there, and vice versa. If he loses his life for Jesus' sake here, he will find it there (the reward of Salvation of the Life [Soul]).

Furthermore, in verse 26 and 27, the Lord uses the words "profit" and "exchange" to identify this present life of the Christian as "a time of investment". These are words that can only be used in connection with soul salvation, since one cannot gain a profit until he makes an investment (is saved). This investment here implied is the same as the talents given in the Parable of the Talents, where the Lord refers to the third servant as an "unprofitable servant". (These kingdom parables will be discussed at length in a later chapter.) Neither can he exchange his soul (life) for anything until he has a life that can be exchanged. Lost people have nothing that can be exchanged. So, Jesus is saying here to the carnal Christian that the world that is to come is much greater than this present world. It is so great that even if a believer came to personally own everything in this present world, he would actually profit nothing, if in the process he lost his *soul* for the coming age (millennial kingdom). For it is through the *saved soul* (acquired now, by losing it here for Christ) that one inherits the next world and coming kingdom of our Lord.

WHERE THE SOUL IS SAVED

1 Peter 1:7-9

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: ⁸ Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: ⁹ Receiving the end [goal] of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

The Salvation of the Soul is a continuous work of the Lord in the lives of all believers, and as such, is based upon a continuous and maturing faith. According to the above three verses of Scripture, this salvation is the end, or goal of our walk of faith on earth.

When we as Christians fully understand this salvation, we will be able to see the love of God operating in all segments of our lives in a continuous effort to qualify us for the kingdom of Christ. God's great desire has always been to have every born-again believer rule and reign with Christ.

Luke 12:32

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give [grant] you the kingdom.

But, in order to qualify for this kingship, one must have a saved soul (life). And in order to have a saved soul, one must have a matured faith. Since the believer's faith cannot be matured unless it overcomes the trials of this world, God then, in loving care, allows certain trials to come into the believer's life. And as the believer overcomes these by faith, God orders new and more intense trials, so that the maturing faith may continue to grow.

This is the meaning of verse 7 that speaks of the trial of our faith as being much more precious than gold (gold representing the riches of this present world system). This is a matured faith that might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

As I end this section, I exhort the Christian to continue in the faith, and not to fall back into the enjoyments of this world and become a disservice to Christ. God is busily working in your life, and everything that happens has a purpose. He will not allow a greater trial to come into your life than that which you are able to overcome. I leave a few warnings with you here:

- (1) The rewards in the world to come are in direct proportion to how much your faith has matured in this present world.
- (2) If your desires are for the trinkets of this world, you will enjoy your soul (life) here, and lose your soul (life) there in the millennial kingdom.
- (3) If you continue to cry out to God to remove the trials from this life, He just may grant your request. If this happens, it will cause your faith to stop maturing and will cause you to fall away into worldly pursuits of non-productivity for Christ and His requirements for your life. If you are now in the game of Christian living, don't ask the "Coach" to take you out.

(4) While God is busily qualifying you to rule and reign, remember that Satan knows who you are, and is busily trying to disqualify you.

(5) If you stay in the Word, particularly the *meat* and *strong meat* doctrines, your faith will be strengthened, and you will continue to automatically have your soul saved.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE SOUL NOT BEING SAVED

Hebrews 10:38-39

Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. ³⁹ But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

These two verses of Scripture sum up a chapter that reveals the future displeasure of the Lord with many believers standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The details of these frightful scenes will be presented in a later chapter in this book. The force of these two verses here, however, teaches us that the consequence of any believer's not living by faith will be the suffering of loss *at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1Cor. 3:15)*. According to verse 38, there are two ways that a believer can live his life here: either by faith, or by drawing back from faith and living by *sight*. If he refuses to live by faith, and as such draws back, God says He will have no pleasure in him. On the basis of this, the last verse (39) gives us an exhortation on how to live our lives here by saying, "*But we are not of them who draw back into perdition (lit. 'But we are not for shrinking back into destruction'); but of them that believe to the Salvation of the Soul.*" This last verse could perhaps even be more easily understood in our modern English with this paraphrase:

"Surely we are not going to be of that group that are drawing back into destruction, but rather of that group that are of faith which leads to the saving of our soul."

At this point, there may be some concern to the reader regarding the word "perdition" which is translated "destruction" in these verses of Scripture. I am also certain that many, upon reading these verses will say, "Surely God is not talking to Christians, since Christians have everlasting life, and cannot lose their eternal life with Christ"! However, this concern may be alleviated if the reader realizes that these fearful verses speak only of the *suffering of loss* for the unfaithful believer for a thousand years (the millennial kingdom). At the end of the thousand years he will be restored, less any rewards, and live forever in a glorified body because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ wrought on the Cross of Calvary, which the believer received by faith. He can lose his *soul* (life in the millennium), but not his saved *spirit*.

In summation, the plea to the reader is those words of verse 35, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompence of reward".

CHAPTER SEVEN

Two Ways and Two Gates

Many Bible teachers consider Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) as the most comprehensive and outstanding of His single-setting teachings. In this extraordinary teaching, Jesus unveils the spiritual reality of the kingdom of heaven on earth, showing us how the people in that kingdom should live in accordance with the highest morality ever revealed to the mind of man. He intended that His words would be careful and provocative instruction to His disciples (Matt. 5:2). And, He certainly intended that the very hearers of these words would carry them out, as indicated in the conclusion of His discourse (Matt. 7:24-27). Therefore, all of His disciples should humble themselves to hear Jesus' words and apply them to their own lives.

Two Ways, Two Gates and Two Destinations

Matthew 7:13-14

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Because Jesus mentioned the gate first, many people assume that one first enters a gate and then walks upon the way, with the destination being at the end of the way. Actually, Jesus mentions the gate first because He is drawing attention to it as the goal. When Jesus mentions a gate and a way, the hearer of that day would certainly picture the gates which constituted entrances into a walled city, and the roads which led up to those gates. Jerusalem, for example, had fifteen gates leading into the city. The main gate into the city was about fourteen feet wide, and a correspondingly broad road led up to that gate. Several people could enter at once through such a gate. However, other gates were low overhead and very narrow, and would only allow a single donkey or a lone traveler or two to pass through the gate. The paths leading up to these gates were naturally narrow and would not be traveled by many persons.

That the gate is at the end of the way, and is the entrance to the final destination, is confirmed by a similar passage in Luke:

Luke 13:24-30

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

Jesus is speaking in this passage in Luke, and we can see here some parallels to the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. Both passages speak of an entry: in Matt. 7:13-14 the positive entry is through a narrow gate, and in Luke 13:24 it is through a narrow door. In Matt. 7:21-23 the Lord Jesus states that He will deny entry into the kingdom of heaven for those who do not do the will of the Father; that is, for those who practice lawlessness. In Luke 13:24-27 Jesus (as "head of the house") denies entry to those who are evildoers.

In Luke Jesus tells us to *strive* in order to enter. The narrow door pictures something future – a day when many will seek to enter but will not be permitted once the head of the house arises and shuts the door. According to this picture one strives now, during our Christian life here on earth, in order to enter at a future day. The entry is pictured clearly in Luke 13 as entry into the future kingdom of God, which will be established upon Christ's return (Matt. 16:27-28; Luke 19:11-15). God's kingdom spans across all ages and all generations (Psa. 145:13). Yet, it is important to realize that it comes in different phases. The next phase will be Christ's kingdom of 1,000 years, and it is entry into this phase of God's kingdom that Jesus speaks of in Luke 13:28. Our participation in the *eternal* phase of God's kingdom is not in view here.

Jesus is *not* teaching people how to obtain salvation of the spirit in the Sermon on the Mount. Rather, the context of demand for righteous *living* shows us that He is teaching His disciples concerning reward. When Christ returns, He will set up His Judgment Seat and evaluate the lives of believers (1Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). This judgment of believers will involve reward according to our works – those works which we have done after conversion (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19: 11-26; 2 Cor. 5:10). The principle of reward according to works must be distinguished from the principle of eternal salvation by grace through faith, which is *apart from works* (Rom. 3:24-28; 4:2-6; 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9).

The believer's reward primarily affects his participation and status in the coming kingdom of 1,000 years when Christ will openly and physically reign upon the earth (Matt. 19:27-29; 25:14-31; Luke 19:12-26; Rev. 20:6). Various crowns (signifying co-rulership with Christ) picture reward for faithfulness (1Cor. 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; James 1:12). The gift of eternal salvation, however, is a matter of grace received by faith. This gift is based solely upon our acceptance of the merits of Christ's work, our trust in Him and His work on the cross for our eternal forgiveness and eternal life (John 3:16; Acts 10:43; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 1:7; 2:8-9). All believers will be with God for eternity, and the eternal phase of the kingdom follows the millennial kingdom of Christ (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:29-30; 1Cor. 15:20-26).

The way that leads to the gate signifies the life we live now in preparation for the coming Judgment Seat of Christ. The life we live now as a believer may take on the characteristics of the broad way or of the narrow way. The gate signifies our entrance, either into the millennial kingdom by the narrow gate, or, in case of failure, into ruin by the broad gate. At His Judgment Seat, Jesus Christ, the righteous Judge, will determine our destiny for the coming 1,000 year kingdom age (2 Tim. 4:1, 8). Note that Jesus is pictured as the Judge in both Matt. 7:21-23 and in Luke 13:25-27.

Jesus tells us that "*the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life.*" (Matt. 7:14). Here is a confirmation that the goal of the narrow way is an entrance (the narrow gate) into the coming millennial kingdom. The Jews of Jesus' day were looking for the Messiah's kingdom. They believed that participation in that glorious kingdom on the earth would be granted to those Jews who did good works in God's eyes. Based upon Dan. 12:2, the Jews believed that at the resurrection God would reward some

with "everlasting life" (the Hebrew expression here means "life belonging to the age") and others with shame and contempt.

Daniel 12:2

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The Scripture records two cases where a Jew came to Jesus with the question of how he could gain this life in the coming age of Messiah's kingdom. These two cases confirm that it is *our works*, our deeds and our living, that determine our status during the next age, prior to eternity. Luke 10 records one of these cases in the story where a lawyer asked Jesus what he must do to gain this future life:

Luke 10:25-28

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

When Jesus states "*thou shalt live*" (v. 28), He meant that the lawyer would be granted life in the coming age at the resurrection (Dan. 12:2). The second case recorded in Scripture is that of the rich young ruler:

Matthew 19:16-17

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

Both of these passages show that entry into that future realm of life is dependent upon a life of obedience to God's commandments (His revealed will). Therefore, a life of discipleship, not just initial faith, is needed to gain "eternal life" in the next age of the Messiah's Kingdom. Jesus makes this very clear in His remarks to the disciples after His encounter with the rich ruler:

Luke 18:29-30

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

The "*world [age] to come*" refers to the next age of 1,000 years, and the Scripture makes it clear that there is more than one age yet to come (Eph. 2:7).

The New Testament uses the phrase "eternal life" 42 times. In many cases it is used to speak of God's life, which we receive as a gift when we believe in Christ and which we experience as a present possession (e.g., John 3:16; 5:24; 10:28; Rom. 6:23). In some passages, however, the phrase is used of life belonging to the next age - the 1,000 year kingdom of Christ - where the experience of God's life will be realized in a greatly magnified way. In these latter passages, such a life is shown to be something that is *gained* by our obedience and cooperation with God during our present lifetime (Matt. 19:16; Luke 10:25; John 4:36; 12:25-26; Rom. 2:6; 6:22).

So, how may we describe the narrow way that leads to life in the next age? The context of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount gives us some solid clues on how we may interpret the meaning of "*the narrow way*." Let us remember that Jesus tells us about the two ways and the two gates as a *concluding* exhortation to His sermon. Therefore, it is only logical that the narrow way will have been already described in some fashion in the Sermon. Jesus' teaching in Matt. 5:3-7:12 has portrayed the inner life of the people of the kingdom, as well as the actions of righteousness demanded by Him. The narrow way is the way of God's exceeding righteousness - a righteousness that is revealed in the living of the disciple. In His sermon, Jesus said plainly that such a practical righteousness is needed in order to enter the future kingdom:

Matthew 5:20

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The context of this statement is clearly one of good works, so the Lord was not referring here to positional or imputed righteousness, which is granted by simple faith (Rom. 4:5, 10-11). *This* righteousness means an actual doing of what is right in God's eyes. *In other words, the narrow way is the way of obedience to God in our daily living.*

The Greek word for narrow carries the meaning of constricted or compressed, and one might picture this narrowness in a passageway constricted by high walls of rock on each side. To walk the narrow way is to be confined to walk in obedience to God's will alone. Later, in the conclusion of His sermon, Jesus reiterated again that only the *actual doing of God's will* shall provide an entrance into the kingdom:

Matthew 7:21

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

The narrow way may also be described as "the way of the cross." Surely, Jesus was the first one to perfectly take the narrow way, and we are to follow Him. Hebrews tells us that He came to do only God's will.

Hebrews 10:7

Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

The doing of God's will is clearly represented in the voluntary taking up of the cross. There Jesus laid aside His own human will in order to accept God's will.

Luke 22:42

Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

In the way of the cross we deny ourselves – all that we are, all that we can do, all that we possess, all of our will and choices – in order to accept His will as our will and follow Him (Matt. 16:24-25, Luke 9:23-24; 14:26, 27, 33). This is the life of faith, not carried out by our efforts, but in full dependence upon God, trusting in Christ as our new life, our strength, our wisdom, and our sanctification (1Cor. 1:30; 15:10; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3-4).

This way means *"Not I, but Christ."* The truth and spiritual reality is that we were crucified with Christ, and have now been raised to walk in the newness of His life (Rom. 6:4). The actual experience of our union with Christ must be pursued and learned, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, *"who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit"* (Rom. 8:4). Finally, then, we see also that this narrow way is the way of the Spirit. We must learn to live and walk according to the Spirit in order to know and carry out God's will. *It is only by the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit that we can live a life of exceeding righteousness.*

It is very important to note that we are not speaking of "sinless perfection" when we describe the narrow way. All of us may have a failure, a sin, at any time. What we are speaking of is a sincere heart attitude that brings about concrete actions in our lives – a daily seeking after God and His will, the willingness to put away in repentance and confession any known sin, the desire for full obedience at any cost, and the dependence in faith upon God and His grace to carry out His will. We must remember, too, that the Christian life is a life - Christ's life - it is *His* life, not our own. Every life entails growth and development. No believer is mature from the beginning. We need to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet. 3:18); we need to be *"transformed into the same image from glory to glory"* (2 Cor. 3:18); we need to grow until *"Christ is formed"* in us (Gal. 4:19). Importantly, Peter reminds us that for the development of Christ's life in us we must be those who are *"applying all diligence"* (2 Pet. 1:5).

Now we must turn to examine the broad way. Once we have seen the characteristics of the narrow way, it is easy to understand the broad way. The broad way is the way of compromise with God's will. The broad way is the opposite of complete self denial; it allows for the self to have some play. The broad way is opposed to the subjective work of the cross in our lives, which should be progressively putting away sin and self. For example, on the broad way I am not willing to completely deny my thoughts, my attitudes, my emotions, my desires, my habits, my intentions and my goals in order to do God's will. I don't allow God to touch these areas of myself; or, I only allow Him to touch certain things, but not others. Instead, I subtly fit these aspects of my self into my own concept of how to live the Christian life. On the broad way I am letting the "self" live, instead of humbly agreeing with God that all of my self, including my "good points", must go to the cross so that Jesus may live in me. Remember that Jesus is talking to *His disciples* in the Sermon on the Mount. The broad way and the narrow way speak of two ways of "living" as a Christian. A person on the broad way does not continually set the mind on the Spirit and follow the Spirit, but tends toward setting the mind on the flesh and follows the flesh (see Rom. 8:4-5).

Jesus told us that the broad way leads to "destruction." What does this mean? First of all, we need to understand something about the Greek word that is translated here as "destruction". The word is *apoleia* (Strong's Concordance #684). We must remember that this is a common word from the Greek language and therefore carries no implicit theological meaning, such as eternal damnation. Its meaning must be understood from the context. The word can mean ruin, a loss or destruction. It does not mean annihilation. It must logically be contrasted with the end of the narrow way, the gate that leads to life. Therefore, the end of following the broad way is some type of loss or ruin for the believer. We have seen that the narrow gate leads to a magnified experience of Christ's life in His coming 1,000 year kingdom. At a minimum, any believer who follows the broad way will not gain entry into this coming wonderful kingdom. (There are more severe penalties beyond this revealed in God's word, but we will not examine them here.)

In Matt. 25:14-30 our Lord Jesus gives us a parable (The Parable of the Talents) for understanding the contrast of the two gates in relation to gaining entry to the kingdom. In the parable the master (Jesus) judges his slaves in regard to their faithful use of his possessions while he was away on a journey (gone

from the earth). At that judgment, the faithful slaves were told that they could "*enter into the joy of your master*" (vs. 21, 23). This speaks of entering the future 1,000 year kingdom. On the other hand, the master judged the unfaithful slave as follows: "*And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (vs. 30). The opposite of joy is pictured here. This scene depicts the slave cast out of the kingdom, away from its brightness and joy. The weeping signifies great sorrow (over missing the kingdom joy), and the gnashing of teeth signifies great regret and self-blame (concerning one's failure to have lived as God intended). (The Parable of the Talents is discussed in greater detail in a later chapter).

The apostle Paul warned believers in several places that if they persisted in certain sins they *would not inherit* (obtain by inheritance) the coming kingdom of God (1Cor. 6:7-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5). Then, we have the following sobering passage where the same Greek word translated destruction again appears:

Philippians 3:14-20

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

In Phil. 3:7-14 Paul is revealing his heart - that he is a person forsaking everything in order to pursue an extraordinary resurrection from the dead, which will be a reward to the faithful believer (Heb. 11:35), and which constitutes the prize which he sought - to rule with Christ in His 1,000 year kingdom (Rev. 20:6). Then, in verses 15-16 he urges those who are mature in Christ to maintain a similar attitude. In verse 17 Paul makes a specific appeal to the brethren to follow the example of his and others' conduct, which is a pattern for the believers. He then contrasts this godly walk with the walk of "many" who had chosen to satisfy their own fleshly appetites.

We must ask the question here: are the "many" in verse 18 believers or unbelievers? Why would Paul have "often told" the Philippians about the fleshly conduct of unbelievers? This knowledge concerning *unbelievers* is common knowledge and does not need stress. We all know that the unregenerate walk according to their fleshly appetites and mind earthly things. Paul here is contrasting his exemplary walk with the walk of many *believers* he had observed. He was weeping for them, because they were now conducting their lives as enemies to the cross of Christ by serving their own fleshly appetites.

If we are mature, living with the sole purpose to know the Lord and gain the prize, we will grieve and weep when we see believers living for fleshly pleasure (see Eze. 9:4). The "many" in Phil. 3:18 were not enemies to the cross as respects eternal redemption, but enemies to the work of the cross in their lives, who should have been putting away the love of the things of this world (Gal. 5:24; 6:14; 1 John 2:15-16). James tells us that we believers can be enemies of God if we love the world and pursue our fleshly desires.

James 4:3-4

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

The "many" whom Paul had observed were minding earthly things: food, entertainment, pleasures, riches, and earthly success. Their heart and their talk were occupied with these things, because these were what they sought and esteemed. But, their love of these things should have been their shame. Of such sensual and world-loving believers, Paul said weeping, "*whose end is destruction*" (Phil. 3:19). "*Broad is the way that leads to destruction.*" (Matt. 7:13). Part of that way can be the minding of earthly things, with the result that one's heart is not looking eagerly for the Lord's return in order to be with Him in His heavenly kingdom.

Many and Few

Our Lord told us plainly that many would walk the broad way and few would walk the narrow way. Actually, Jesus said that there would be few who would "find" the narrow way and the narrow gate that leads to life. The fact that Jesus used the verb "find" only in connection with the narrow way is significant. To walk along the broad way is very easy; it does not require any seeking. It only involves following along with the great religious crowd, the majority of Christendom. But, to *find* the narrow way and the narrow gate involves some *earnest seeking* after Christ Himself. To my observation it means that a believer is not satisfied with the usual church routine, but is intensely hungry for God alone and is willing to pay a price to find Him and to do His will. A great picture of this seeking heart is found in Jeremiah 29. There Jeremiah prophesies concerning the end of the 70 years of captivity of the Jews in Babylon. He tells of God calling His people back to Jerusalem. He also vividly portrays the seekers praying earnestly to the Lord in order to be involved in His plan concerning Jerusalem and the reestablishment of the proper worship of God.

Jeremiah 29:10-13

For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

It was only a remnant that returned to Jerusalem to rebuild - this pictures the principle of the "few".

A Warning About False Prophets

Matthew 7:15-20

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Immediately after exhorting the disciples concerning two ways, two gates and two destinations, Jesus spoke several sentences about the danger of false prophets. Have you ever considered the connection here? Why does Jesus shift to the topic of false prophets? It is because He is so aware of the potential danger. In the Scripture the false prophets seem to always be near, ever ready to mislead God's children. Now the Lord is warning the disciples that as they seek to walk the narrow way there will be false prophets subtly trying to lead them astray onto the broad way. They will appear in sheep's clothing, meaning their character and intentions are cleverly disguised. *This does not mean that all false prophets are unbelievers.* They may be. But, they may also be true believers who have turned aside from the right way (following God's path of righteous living), as in the case of the false teachers in 2 Peter (2 Pet. 2:1, 15, 20, 21). Instead of helping the disciples progress along the right way, their motive is to use the disciples for their own selfish ends.

The Lord told us that we would know them by their fruits. The test of the fruit is *not* to determine if the prophet (one supposedly speaking for God) *is a true Christian*, but the test is to determine if he is a *false prophet*. What kind of fruit is meant here? It seems that the testimony of Scripture is that false prophets may have bad fruit either in their words (their speaking for God) or in their deeds (their lives). We should never be afraid to test those who come to us, claiming to speak for God. Jesus commended the church in Ephesus for testing apostles (Rev. 2:2). Shown below is some of the "bad fruit" of false prophets in the Scriptures.

The Bad Fruit of their Words

Claiming to speak for God when He did not send them or speak to them. (Jer. 14:14; 23:21; 29:9-10).

Failure to speak so as to turn people from their sins. (Jer. 23:22; Lam. 2:14)

Disregard for the truth of God's word and failure to teach the people rightly according to God's truth. (Jer. 23:26-28; Matt. 16:12; 2 Cor. 11:4; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:18; 1 John 4:1-3; Jude 1:4)

Speaking arrogant words of vanity. (2 Pet. 2:18)

The Bad Fruit of their Lives

Greed. Ministry for personal profit. (Ez. 13:19; Mic. 3:5; 2 Pet. 2:3, 14-15; Jude 1:11)

Ambition to be recognized, to gain a following. (Acts 20:29-30; Gal. 4:17).

Self exaltation and boasting according to the flesh. (Jer. 23:32; 2 Cor. 11:18, 20)

Taking advantage of others. (2 Cor. 11:20; Jude 1:16)

Insulting or otherwise mistreating believers. (2 Cor. 11:20)

Attempting to bring others into submission to themselves. (2 Cor. 11:20)

Preying upon unstable souls. (2 Pet. 2:14)

Unchecked, improper sexual lusts. (Jer. 29:23; 2 Pet. 2:14)

Living sensually, indulging the flesh. (2 Pet. 2, 10; Jude 1:4)

Deceitfulness and lying. (Jer. 23:14; 29:8; 1 Tim. 4:2; 2 Tim. 3:13)

Enticing others by appealing to their fleshly desires. (2 Tim. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:18)

Causing division (Jude 1:19)

To stay on the narrow way we must avoid false prophets. Therefore, we must look at the fruit of those who would try to speak to us in the name of God. Perhaps a so-called minister of God seems to have all the right doctrine. We had better check his life before we let his ministry have influence in our life. Or, perhaps one seems to be so gracious, so kind and so humble. Yet, we had better check his words carefully against the truth. Jesus warned us ahead of time to beware of the false prophets.

Jesus also told us that the false prophets who had bad fruit would be severely judged: *"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."* (Matt. 7:19). The "fire" here is used in an illustration, and should not be necessarily understood as "the lake of fire." It certainly means a severe judgment, because those who claim to speak for God will have a stricter judgment applied to them, and God will surely not treat lightly those false prophets who lead His people astray (Jam. 3:1; 2 Pet. 2:17).

The Judgment Seat of Christ Depicted

The next section of the Sermon on the Mount continues the theme of entry into the coming Kingdom, and includes the matter of coming judgment. However, this is not the judgment for unbelievers, but the judgment for believers.

Matthew 7:21-23

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Here Jesus is speaking of a coming day of judgment. In verse 22 Jesus is speaking of that future day when many will say to Him, "Lord, Lord." The specific day pictured here is the time of Christ's Judgment Seat, where during His Parousia He examines the believer's works. (Matt. 25:19; Luke 19:15; 1Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10). This scene of judgment upon *believers* takes place *before* the millennium, conducted during the time period of His return (Luke 19:15). Permanent judgment for *unbelievers* is not until *after* the millennium at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15). The judgment itself determines recompense (reward) according to the works of the believer (2 Cor. 10:5). This judgment of believers does not determine eternal salvation, as that matter has already been decided by the faith of the believer in Christ (John 5:24). Eternal salvation is by grace through faith, not according to works (Eph. 2:8-9). The *reward* for the believer can be positive or negative (Matt. 25:20-30; Luke 19:17, 22-26; Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25).

In the scene depicted in verses 21-23 are persons who come to the Lord for judgment, *presenting their works to Him*. They address Jesus, "Lord, Lord." Only believers can address the Lord with this title in sincerity (1Cor. 12:3), and only believers will appear at this Judgment Seat. Many will tell Jesus about their Christian works done "in Your name." Believers may claim that works are done for Christ "in His name" (representing Him), but that does not make it so. In an outstanding chapter on false prophets God says that the false prophets prophesied lies "in His name" (Jer. 23:25).

The Lord Jesus will declare to these who tell Him of their Christian works: *"I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."* (Matt. 7:23). Here we have one of the most commonly misinterpreted verses in Scripture. The Lord is not saying that these people never knew *Him*. Rather, Jesus makes a declaration that *He* never knew *them*.

So then, this "I never knew you" is a more general denial, one that has to do only with entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

So then, what is this denial of knowing these? Consider what the Lord said to Peter:

Matthew 26:34

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

And in what manner did Peter fulfill this prophecy?

Matthew 26:70-74

70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.

Therefore, we can readily see that the essence of Peter's "denying" the Lord was that he said, "I know him not". So then, when the Lord said to these, "I never knew you", He was, according to the Lord's own example, denying them. In 2 Timothy we find this interesting statement:

2 Timothy 2:12

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

That Paul is speaking of Christians is very clear because of his use of the words "we" and "us". So then, how can a blood-bought child of God deny his Lord? We find this seldom considered answer in Titus:

Titus 1:16

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Remember, in the passage in Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus says the basis of determining entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven is *doing* "the will of my Father which is in heaven".

These profess that they know God. How can a Christian not know God?

1 John 2:3-4

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Consider that in the above verse the Apostle John is addressing Christians, not the unsaved. The unsaved do not have the spiritual capacity to understand the spiritual meaning of his words. Read the first chapter of 1John again; perhaps you will see that he is not talking about or to the unsaved. So then, truly knowing Jesus, in the Biblical sense, is conditioned upon *keeping His commandments*. Or, you could say in the negative, it is conditioned upon not being disobedient. Consider again this same verse:

Titus 1:16

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

So then, here we see a Christian who professes to know God; but according to 1 John 2:3-4 quoted above, if he is disobedient, this saved person does not really know God. The word translated here as reprobate also means "rejected" or "castaway". Paul kept his "*body under*", lest he himself should be declared a '*castaway*' and therefore be rejected at the Judgment Seat (1Cor 9:27). Were the persons referred to above to stand before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ, all of their good works would be rejected. Why? Because they were done in disobedience. These were "good" works the Holy Spirit did not direct them to do. The Lord does not recognize "good" works done in the flesh. He says they are abominable. Cain brought an offering before the Lord from the works of his flesh, and his offering was rejected by God. Cain knew what God required; but in disobedience he thought to bring before God what was right in his own eyes. Therefore, he did not act in faith to what God had said.

1 John 3:12

Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil (wicked, bad), and his brother's righteous.

In a like manner, it is possible for a Christian to do works through disobedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the Holy Spirit did not tell them to do them); these are works of the flesh, and in so doing these works, they deny the One Who would have them do good works in the power of the Spirit. The Scripture says that in so doing, they deny Him.

Also, the word for "know" here is *ginosko* (Strong's Concordance #1097). Like any word, it can carry different meanings according to the context. Here it means to recognize, or acknowledge, someone for what they claim to be. This meaning of *ginosko* here is confirmed by a standard Greek lexicon (Arndt and Gingrich's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*).

So, Jesus here is not saying that these people never had a relationship with Him. Rather, He is saying that He has never recognized them, or acknowledged them, as proper servants of His, doing His work according to His standard. Instead, *He declares that the work they do for Him is "lawlessness,"* It is important to note that the ground for Jesus' rejection of these people is their works, not their lack of faith; they "practice lawlessness."

This matter of "lawlessness" is very revealing, and provides a key for understanding the Lord's rejection of these believers. The Greek word here is *anomia* (Strong's Concordance #458), which means not having or acknowledging the law. The law here does not refer specifically to the Old Testament Law, but

generally to His Biblical commands and principles. We can use an example from everyday life to illustrate this matter of disregarding the law. Many times we see drivers on the road who have little regard for the law. They routinely speed, or perhaps follow too closely or run yellow lights when they could stop. The same pattern can be observed in many believers, who disregard God's principles in their Christian life or in their work for the Lord. Just like drivers who want to drive the way they like, these believers like to live their lives their own way, refusing to be controlled by God's clear commandments or principles. The Amplified Bible makes this matter clear: *"And then I will say to them openly (publicly), I never knew you; depart from Me, you who act wickedly – disregarding My commands."* (Matt. 7:23, AMP).

The disregarded commands could include principles revealed in the Sermon on the Mount, but would not necessarily be limited to these. These unapproved believers are *self-willed*, refusing to give full ground to the word of God in their lives. This does not mean that they never do anything the Lord requires, but it does mean that they are basically *self-willed*, only giving ground to the Lord according to their choice, when it is acceptable to them. This type of living is in contrast to the victorious Christian, who is actively seeking to learn God's will and be governed by it. Such believers can, of course, have failures, but their heart is to repent, confess their sin and rise up again, sincerely seeking to fully obey the Lord.

In Paul's last letter, he writes to Timothy, giving him careful and fatherly instruction how to serve the Lord. In chapter two of 2 Timothy Paul uses the illustrations of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer in respect to service. Concerning the athlete, Paul says: *"And if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules."* (2 Tim. 2:5). Here Paul is clearly telling Timothy (and us) that if we disregard God's principles we will not receive positive reward at the Judgment Seat. Any servant of Christ who chooses to serve not in accordance with Biblical commands or principles will be denied entry into the coming Kingdom. This denial is exactly what is prophesied by the Lord Jesus in Matt. 7:22-23.

One may ask, "What commandments or principles are we talking about?" Let me give just a few as examples. Some may serve God, but they do so in order to be noticed by others and receive praise from them. This is a violation of the principle revealed in Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18. Here Jesus clearly tells us that they will not receive a reward. He also tells us in Matt. 7:19 that all of the false prophets will receive a negative judgment. The bad fruit they bear is evidence of their violation of God's principles. Review the list above of the "bad fruit" and consider the violations to God's ways of holiness and integrity. Others may serve God using fleshly (according to man's natural wisdom or energy) or worldly methods, such as entertainment. Any such fleshly or worldly methods will cause the works to be burned up as wood, hay and stubble (1Cor. 3:12-15). The same is true if the building work is divisive in its nature (1Cor. 3:3-4).

The temptation in Christian work is often to gain the greatest number to join our church, or come to our evangelistic service or conference, or follow our ministry. This temptation leads many to choose worldly or fleshly ways which seem expedient in accomplishing their ends. But God is more interested in the way we serve Him than in outward "success." He is more interested in us following His commands than He is in the "results" we can obtain by using our methods. Saul failed God's test when he decided to spare the best of Amalek's flocks rather than sacrifice them to the Lord. God had told him to destroy them all. Samuel rebuked him: *"Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice."* (1 Sam. 15:22)

Another way of looking at this denial on Jesus' part is found in Philippians:

Philippians 3:8-11

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Paul says here that he *counted all things but loss* in order to attain *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*. He says he suffered the loss of all things that he may win Christ. This process was necessary in order (v 10) that he may *know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comfortable unto his death*. All these things he did - in other words, he laid down his life for Christ's sake - and in so doing he accomplished the following:

Mark 8:35

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

Paul "lost his life" then, in order that he might save it there – at the Judgment Seat of Christ; and having gained it there, he would attain unto the (first) resurrection of the dead.

Let us recap this most important section of the Sermon to be sure we understand its message clearly:

v. 21: Jesus states that not every one who says to Him "Lord, Lord" on that future day of judgment will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of God.

v. 22: On that future day many will call Him Lord and present their works to Him as works done "in His name."

v. 23: Jesus will declare to them that He has never recognized them (as proper servants), and He will tell them to depart from Him because they work lawlessness, disregarding His commands.

The very next word Jesus speaks is "therefore", indicating that He will now draw a lesson or a conclusion from the preceding statements. The "therefore" introduces a section wherein Jesus concludes that to build a proper foundation requires one to do what He commands, not just to hear His commands. It should be very clear that the entire context here is speaking about a believer's works – not his initial faith. Indeed, works is not only the immediate context, but righteous actions (works) is the context of the entire Sermon on the Mount. This sermon does not concern unbelievers. If the "many" in verse 22 were unbelievers, and their problem was a matter of trusting in works, rather than faith, in order to be eternally saved (entrance into the eternal kingdom), then Jesus would have drawn a different lesson in His concluding words (verse 24 and following). His "therefore" (v. 24) would have been followed by an admonition that faith is what is required to be approved. But the entire Sermon is instruction to Jesus' *disciples* on how to live, and in verses 21-23 Jesus is warning His disciples that even works done "for Him" by them will undergo scrutiny as to whether or not obedience to His commands has been observed.

From this section we should be very clear that the determining factor of our future entry into the coming 1,000 year Kingdom of Christ is our *obedience to God's will*. This truth is in accord with the previous admonition Jesus gave concerning the two ways and the two gates.

Hearing and Acting Upon Our Lord's Words

Matthew 7:24-27

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

The Lord's final word in His Sermon again deals with the matter of obedience. But note that the obedience the Lord requires is not ambiguous. It is very specific. It is obedience to His words. Here the specific reference is to "these words", the words of the Sermon on the Mount. (Of course, as a principle, we should be those who obey all the words of the Lord, not just those in Matthew 5-7.) In introducing the same parable in Luke, Jesus begins with a question (obviously asked of *His own disciples*): "*Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?*" (Luke 6:46) Those who would hear and obey "these words" build on a solid foundation.

The rain, the floods and the wind all describe various tests that will come to challenge us in our Christian life. When those tests come, who will stand, maintaining a proper and approved testimony of Christ? The only ones who will stand will be those who make it a practice to hear His word and obey it. Those who have not made this their habit have only sand for a foundation. They hear the word, but they have not made it their heart habit to obey. When the tests come, then their Christian testimony crumbles.

How can we describe the tests that come to a Christian? These come in many forms. The Bible tells us that the entire history of the generation that came out of Egypt and wandered in the wilderness was a history of being tested. And their experiences are an example for us, written for our learning (1Cor. 10:11). This testing was to see who would really obey God during that time of trial. God desired that all of the trials would produce a learned attitude of obedience, as shown in Deut. 8.

Deuteronomy 8:2

2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Also, it was a time when they were often brought low, so that they could learn to depend upon God and His supply.

Deuteronomy 8:3

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

It was God's intention by such testing that those Old Testament saints would be trained in the matter of obedience, thus becoming mature and responsible children of God. Our Father has this same objective with us.

Deuteronomy 8:5-6

Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. 6 Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

We will encounter many circumstances and difficulties in our human life. Things will not turn out the way we planned. Perhaps our marriage will not be what we expected. Perhaps we will have a trial of illness. Perhaps our children will give us much heartache. Maybe someone will oppose us or criticize us wrongly. Perhaps we will know only poverty or great difficulty in making a living. Or, it may be that we will suffer severe persecution for our faith. Another problem could be that we feel our opportunity for service to the Lord is not what we envisioned. Perhaps we wanted some grander "ministry" or some full time Christian work. Perhaps we desired a service with less heartache and trials. Will we grow bitter or disappointed in all of these trials, *or will we learn to seek the Lord's will for us in the midst of each circumstance and obey His will for us?*

There are other tests besides difficulties. Maybe we have an abundance of material goods, as many do in America. Will we spend our money upon ourselves for our enjoyment, or will we be rich towards God (see Luke 12:16-21)? Will we store up treasures for ourselves upon earth, or in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20)? Paul learned to be faithful to the Lord both in poverty and in abundance (Phil. 4:11-13). The bottom line is: will we sincerely seek to obey and follow God no matter what our circumstances are in life? We must also trust that His way of carrying out His plan in our lives, including all of the testing circumstances He allows, is much wiser than our way (Isa. 55:8-9).

The Scripture reveals that *God tests us in order to bring forth our obedience to Him*, thus revealing the reality of the life of Christ in our lives. For example, God tested Abraham in Gen. 22. God wanted to see if Abraham would be willing to give up his most cherished possession, his son Isaac, in order to be obedient to God. Of course, Abraham had to trust the Lord in this circumstance and even believe that God would still be faithful to His promise to make Abraham the father of a multitude through a son born from his seed (Gen. 15:3-6).

So it is also when God tests us. He wants to see our obedience, even if costs something precious to us. This something could be a possession, a relationship, some enjoyment we savor, some way we use our free time, some object of security or even a "ministry." Are we willing to leave houses, mother, father, children or jobs for His sake and the gospel's sake (Mk. 10:29)? Or, perhaps He will ask us to give up something of the self that we hold dear, such as our "right" to be respected or appreciated by our family members or others. We must give up what He requires, trusting Him that He will still carry out all that He has planned for our lives.

At the core of Jesus final words in Matt. 7:24-27 is the matter of not just hearing, but also obeying His words. The fact that Jesus points this out tells us that believers can be "hearers only." It is a frightening thing to realize that those who hear but do not obey may actually deceive themselves into thinking that their walk is approved by God. James tells us of this possibility: *"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."* (James 1:22). Is this not what happened to those in the scene of the Judgment Seat in verses 21-23? These thought that they were doing the will of God and

presented their Christian works to Jesus as evidence. However, they were disapproved because they did not keep God's principles while carrying out their service. To be active "in church" and under Bible ministry carries with it a danger. The danger is that we may be in a Christian atmosphere, hearing many things from the Scriptures, and deceive ourselves into thinking that we are doing fine as a believer just because we hear and learn the truth. Yet, the Lord is seeking those who have a humble heart, sincerely desiring to live out what His words require.

The final test for all believers will be at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those who have built upon a foundation of sand will find that the "house" of their Christian doings will crumble before the searching, judging eyes of Jesus, the righteous Judge.

So, Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount are really meant to prepare us for that coming day of judgment (Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:5, 16). He is telling us how we should live in light of the coming Judgment Seat of Christ, with its momentous and decisive consequence of reward and entry into the coming 1,000 year Kingdom of Christ. May we be those who heed His Sermon with the utmost seriousness and prepare. We only have one Christian lifetime in which to prepare.

A Word of Encouragement

The words of the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount present a very high standard for Christ's disciples. When we realize how great the demands of the Lord are for obedience, we may lose heart and feel that we just cannot make it. We should realize, however, that God not only presents a "demand" for obedience, but also provides a "supply" that enables us to obey! This "supply" is called "grace" in the New Testament. Grace, which has sometimes been defined as "unmerited favor", is actually much more than that. Let us explore this matter a little further.

Too often believers still hold a wrong concept concerning obeying our Lord. They tend to feel that God wants them to obey all the commands of Scripture, and calls upon them to accomplish this by an act of consecration, a decision to live for God. This idea is one of those dangerous "half truths" that one may encounter in life. Yes, God does want us to make an absolute commitment to follow Him, but He does not want us to focus on "obeying the commandments", using our best efforts to carry them out. Such thoughts are all in the realm of being "under law". To be "under law" means that our relationship with God is focused upon our responsibility to obey a set of commandments in order to be acceptable to Him. Such a focus sets into motion a self-effort to obey the commandments. This self-effort in turn leads to failure, because the power of indwelling sin is triggered by such self-effort. This is exactly the struggle that Paul wrote about in Romans seven. A life lived "under law" is characterized by independence from God. The person himself must know what to do and must supply some effort to carry out the demands of the law.

Instead of trying to live up to God's standards by being "under law", the New Testament reveals that we should be those living "under grace." Being "under grace" involves the living union of the believer with Christ, realized by means of the Holy Spirit directing and supplying us with His life and power. This life is pictured by the branch abiding in the vine (John 15). A person living under grace is receiving and experiencing Christ as His life and His empowering supply (1Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:20-21; 5:4). The believer experiencing grace is focused upon the living person of Christ. This experience is characterized by a complete dependence and looking away to Christ for everything – both direction (what to do) and empowerment (ability to do what Christ directs). Such a person draws completely upon the grace of God for every step and for every task. And, wonderfully, God meets such dependency and faith on our part with the very supply of Himself as grace. This is a life where the old "I", who we were in Adam, is

experienced as having been crucified (in union with Christ), and where the new "I", who we now are in Christ, is experienced through our union with Him in His resurrection.

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

If the reader has not had much experience of this living by grace, do not be discouraged. Rather, seek the Lord to learn more about this. It is very liberating to live in union with Christ and to abandon living up to God's standards by our own fleshly efforts.

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

More on the Strait (Narrow) Gate and the Judgment Seat

Luke 13:24

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Now of this strait gate which will be placed at the Judgment Seat of Christ, Jesus says in Luke 13:24 that we are to *strive* to enter. Since striving is a work, this verse of Scripture cannot be talking about Salvation by Grace, as this is entered *through and by faith*, respectively. This striving, then, could be characterized as a runner who is running to win a race.

Paul expresses this striving in his own ministry when he likened his own life as one who was in a race. In 1Cor. 9:24-27 he admonishes us to run the same race he was running. Here he uses the Grecian games of that day to illustrate how we should run. Those that ran in the games and won received only a crown made from laurel leaves, which would soon fade away. But with the race our Lord wants us to run we can win a heavenly crown that cannot fade away (1Pet. 5:4). As there in the Grecian games, the athletes mastered their bodies to win a physical race, so it is here He wants us to master our bodies to win a spiritual race.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Notice that Paul uses the word *strive* in verse 25 and then continues by saying he is in a serious race and a serious boxing match. He tells us he is not shadow boxing, but has a real opponent; and in order to win, he has to keep his body under subjection. Then he says something very interesting in verse 27: "*lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway* (Gr. 'adokomos' translated disapproved)."

Paul was not concerned with losing his *salvation* (since that is by the righteousness of

Christ), but rather his *soul*. Here he says it is possible for him to preach to others but still be disapproved at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Think of it - the great Apostle Paul said even *he* could be disapproved!

The Prize of the High Calling ... Through the Narrow Gate

Philippians 3:13-14

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

In these two verses, Paul once again uses the analogy of the race. Here, he tells us that he is not counting on himself as having already apprehended (won the race). In light of this, he is saying he will not be concerned over his past works, good or bad. Instead, he will forget about them (after having been cleansed of the bad according to 1John 1:9) and press on toward the mark (the strait gate) for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (the out-resurrection into the inheritance). Similar to a physical foot race, the mark (the strait gate) is the finish line. In verse 11 of the chapter, he tells us what this high calling is. Here, in the King James Version of the Bible, it is called the resurrection, but in the Greek, the "resurrection" is prefixed with the Greek word "ek", which means "out-resurrection." This is not the same word that is used for the rapture. Therefore, verse 11 speaks of a resurrection that must be won. It is a resurrection that can only occur after rapture to the Judgment Seat. It was so important to Paul that he was willing to lose all things (verse 8), that he might win this high calling. In the light of the *prize* (verse 14) and where it will be won, verse 11 then could amplified as follow:

Philippians 3:11

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of [out from among those who have been raised from] the dead.

This, then, is an out-resurrection from all who are assembled at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those who win this spiritual race, having their souls saved, will experience this higher lifting up (entrance through the strait gate, or door), and will receive glorified bodies as well as inherit the Great Salvation.

The Kingdom of God is Behind the Strait Gate

Luke 13:24-29

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. 25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: 26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. 28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. 29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

In light of Jesus' teaching in verse 22, someone asked Jesus, "Are there just a few that will be saved?" (Luke 13:23). His answer was, "*strive to enter in...*". Since one cannot have his spirit saved by striving

(works), then Jesus is speaking of a different salvation. That is, the Salvation of the Soul, a judicial determination which, upon such approval, will allow entrance through the strait gate.

Knocking on the Strait Gate

Jesus further shows us this same gate, or door, in the 25th verse of our text, and tells us that it leads to the Kingdom of God in verses 28 and 29. The scene here is at the Judgment Seat of Christ, not on earth. The door that is finally shut by the master of the house is the door to the bridal chamber and the wedding feast. Those that are knocking to get in are not lost people, (who are certainly not even *at* the Judgment Seat), but rather Christians, who in verse 24 were seeking to enter in but were not able. Here, they are standing outside of the door (after the rapture and at the Judgment Seat) knocking and calling Jesus Lord (which lost people could not do here) and crying to be let in. Jesus answers, "*I know you not whence ye are*". This is where most commentators lose it. Jesus is not saying "I don't know you." God knows all things, certainly. Neither is He saying, "You are not saved", since they have been raptured and are at the Judgment Seat, calling Jesus Lord. Consider the following verse:

1 Corinthians 12:3

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

But rather He is saying, "I do not recognize you as belonging to that group who were granted entrance through the door". He is *denying* them in the presence of His angels. It is then, in verse 26 that they will begin to try and prove their worthiness to be allowed in. They remind Jesus they are saved by saying, "we have eaten and drunk in Your presence" (Christian fellowship) and "You taught in our streets" (family and Church). But Jesus will say the second time, "I don't recognize you as being a part of this group ...depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity". By workers of iniquity, Jesus is saying that their works were produced through the flesh; whereas He accepts only works produced through obedience to the Holy Spirit. Thus, their works are "unrighteousness" (iniquity is elsewhere translated as such in 23 of the 25 verses that use this Greek word). These can be compared to the works Cain did attempting to satisfy God.

Genesis 4:7

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.

In the above Scripture, Cain had brought to God works of the flesh, rather than what God had demanded. God said Cain would have been accepted, had he done *well*. Cain brought his own works of iniquity rather than by faith bringing what God had said would be required. Had the Christians in Luke 13 above done *well*, they would also have been accepted; they then would not have been termed "workers of unrighteousness". God does not accept our unrighteous works (termed *dead* works – Heb. 6:1; 9:14) produced through the flesh. Not even if they seem *well* to us (not even if *we* think they are good works).

The Bridal Chamber Behind the Strait Gate

In verses 28 and 29 of the text under consideration, God shows us those believers who will finish the race in this life, and will cross the finish line, and will enter the strait gate into the "Kingdom of God." This beautiful picture shows the bridal chamber and wedding feast. In verses 28 and 29, God shows us the composition of those at the wedding supper: Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets (the Old Testament Saints) and the portion taken mostly from the Gentiles – the New Testaments saints (mostly Gentiles from the east, and from the west, etc.).

A Wedding Garment to Enter the Strait Gate

Matthew 22:11-14

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Revelation 19:7-9

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. ⁹ And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Here our lord gives us a closer look at the bridal chamber and the qualification for entering into it. Rev. 19:7 tells us this qualification is *readiness*, i.e., "*His wife (bride) hath made herself ready.*" And the way she made herself ready was done by allowing the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual works (the actual wedding garment) *through* her, the bride. This garment, then, represents the righteous works of the saints, and its name is "the *righteousnesses* (plural – works) of the saints". Notice that this garment is not called the righteousness of Christ, since that spiritual garment has already been placed on everyone who has been born again. Contrary to this, the "righteousnesses of the saints" is a garment that has *not yet* been put on the new believer in Christ, and indeed cannot be put on until the Judgment Seat of Christ, and then only by the bride herself. In Bible times, the bride always made her own wedding garment. No garment, no wedding. God tells us the same thing. If we do not have our wedding garment made when we arrive at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will not be allowed to enter into the wedding feast. Thus, the garment of the "righteousness of Christ" speaks of salvation of the *spirit*, while the garment of the "righteousnesses (plural) of the saints" speaks of the Salvation of the Soul.

Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth

Luke 13:28

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

Contrary to that which most Bible teachers preach and teach, "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is not intended to be descriptive of the lost in hell. Rather, it shows the grief of the saved at the Judgment Seat of Christ who will suffer loss. These are the ones who will be left outside the door (the narrow gate) knocking to get in. Those who lose their souls due to having saved their lives on earth (see Matt. 16:24-26), and as a result lose their lives at the Judgment Seat, will express great sorrow. Perhaps some of these people will have been great denominational leaders in this life, and some will have been pastors and Church leaders. These, of all people, you would think, would have had their souls saved and thus gained rewards. But their works, consisting of wood, hay, and stubble that was produced in the power of the

flesh, will have been consumed by fire. Contrariwise, there will be those who will enter the kingdom that will be a great surprise to everyone who knew them on earth. These will be men and women whose works in this life may have seemed insignificant, but when tried in the fire will be found to be gold, silver, and precious stones. These are works that were produced through them by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus shall be brought to fulfillment the saying, *"And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last"* (Luke 13:30 of the same passage under consideration).

Notice further that they are "weeping and gnashing their teeth", because they have been "thrust out" of the Kingdom of God. This is the same Greek word (Strong's 1544 'ekballo') which is variously translated in the King James Version as "cast out; thrust out", etc. Of particular note is that this is the same word used in Matthew Chapter 8, where again this particular group is addressed, and where again it is noted that "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth":

Matthew 8:12

But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But you say, "These could not possibly be Christians!" To which I would reply that our very Lord Jesus said differently, for he defined the "children of the kingdom" in the following verse:

Matthew 13:38

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

And to where are these saved people cast? To the *"outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"*.

This is the place where, instead of the glories of the Kingdom of God, the unprofitable servants of God will spend at least 1,000 years while God disciplines them in order to cause them to "lose their life" in the millennial age, because they refused to lose it on earth in this age in their daily living. God's requirement for a saved person to receive a glorified body is that the person must first be judged to have a saved soul. If a person fails to allow his soul to be saved on earth, then God will put it to death at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and he will be cast into outer darkness for the duration of the millennial kingdom. This person will then suffer corrective discipline, so that he may later qualify for Salvation of the Soul and finally be given a glorified body. This is a loving discipline, because:

Hebrews 12:6

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

And these will be raised at the "second" resurrection (at the end of the millennial rule), because they were not found worthy to be part of the first resurrection. These are weeping and gnashing their teeth at the Judgment Seat of Christ, because, too late, they realized that they had wasted their lives on earth in the pursuit of satisfying their souls in this life. God is merciful; He does not send these persons to the Lake of Fire, because their spirits were saved when they believed in Jesus. Because of His grace, God gives the free gift of eternal life to all who call on the name of the Lord. But because of His righteousness, He will not give a reward to those who are not deserving. The reward is for works, and these Christians had no works left after the consuming fire of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Too late, these dear brothers and sisters in the Lord realize that they, even as Esau, traded their inheritance for one morsel of meat: that is,

the trinkets that this world has to offer. Therefore these have "suffered loss" at the Judgment Seat, and such a loss it is that they are now "weeping and gnashing their teeth". We have all been warned in Hebrews of this result:

Hebrews 12:15-17

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; ¹⁶ Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. ¹⁷ For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Thus, this verse speaks of those who are weeping and gnashing their teeth: "*Though he sought it carefully with tears*". This one "*would have inherited the blessing*", but "*he was rejected*". Furthermore, Jesus tells us in verse 17 that, though he seeks a "*place of repentance*", none shall be given.

We are clearly warned in 1 Corinthians of these things:

1 Corinthians 10:11-12

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. ¹² Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

This verse speaks of today's typical Christian, who is warned in Scripture of the consequences of living for the world rather than living his life for the Lord. The ends of the world are coming on these Christians, and they are for the most part utterly oblivious of the consequences of their lifestyles. They think that everything is fine, that "all is well with my soul", as the song goes; but God is telling them that though they think all is well ("*thinketh he standeth*"), they are in danger of falling (from grace). These have carried the doctrine of the grace of God beyond the bounds of His righteousness, and have thought that because of the liberty they have in Christ Jesus that they can live their lives any way they choose; because, after all, "Am I not saved by grace through faith?" As Paul put so eloquently:

Galatians 5:4-7

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. ⁵ For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶ For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. ⁷ Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

These did not obey the truth, and because of this disobedience were called "workers of iniquity" by Christ Himself.

The diagram on the following page may help to fix in your mind the various locations and times of the two ways, two gates, and two destinations presented in this chapter.

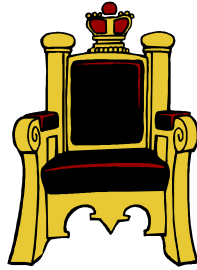
Two Paths - Two Gates



The Broad Way vs. The Narrow Way – (Loss vs. Life)

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer **loss**.
(1Cor 3:15)

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die (Rom 8:13a)



If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a **reward**.
(1Cor 3:14)

But if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Rom 8:13b)

Bridal Chamber



Kingdom of Heaven
The Chosen

Luke 13:24
Strait Gate

Strive to Enter

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter, and shall not be able.
(Luk 13:24)

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his **life** for my sake shall **find** it.

Judgment Seat of Christ

The Wide Gate

Castaway

Loss

Suffer Loss
Be Cast Away
(Destruction, Ruin)



For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and **many** there be which go in thereat.
(Mat 7:13)

Many are called, but **few** are chosen. Mat 24:14

(Save His Life Now)

The Broad Way

(Lose His Life Now)

The Narrow Way

Tribulation
Patience
Experience
Hope

The Life of a Christian after
Salvation of the Spirit

The Called

Life
Salvation of the Soul

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto **life**, and **few** there be that **find** it. (Mat 7:14)

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Joy of Running the Race

CONDITIONS FOR A VICTORIOUS LIFE

In this chapter, I will return to the "narrow way" that I taught in the last chapter, and discuss the *joy* of running the Christian race. In the last chapter I wrote about the trials and tribulations of that race, whereas in this chapter, we will see God's promise to furnish every need of the Christian that is running the race.

Matthew 6:31-33

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

The secret to joyous living is found in meeting a condition given by the Lord in the 33rd verse of our text..."seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you". For centuries the majority of the Church has misunderstood the meaning of this verse. And again, this was because of their failure to see and/or understand the "Word of the Kingdom". Let us look at some of the false teaching that has been used to try to explain this verse.

One group has taught that the Kingdom of God is salvation. Thus, when one is saved he enters into the Kingdom of God. But this cannot be correct, since lost people do not, and indeed *cannot* seek God.

Romans 3:11

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Also, God does not supply all of a lost man's needs just for seeking. No! The lost do not seek God. God seeks the lost, and when one is saved, he does not "find the Lord", but rather "the Lord finds him".

Others, however, have taught that the kingdom of God is the Church. Therefore, if the saved man would only seek to enlarge the Church in this world by the programs of man, all things would be added to him. With this kind of reasoning, the coming literal king and kingdom were *spiritualized* (made non-literal) and a new kind of theology was invented called "amillennialism" (no literal kingdom, no literal millennium). This false theology teaches that the kingdom has already come in spiritual form, entered into the heart of Christians, and thus become the Church. This false view promotes the growth of large denominations and Churches, and is an invention of the soul of man. It is true that the Holy Spirit is sealed in the heart of a saved man, and he is able to walk in the Spirit and power of this present kingdom on earth. But this is not the *ultimate* Kingdom of God to which all Scripture looks forward.

The true interpretation of our text speaks of a *literal* King and kingdom. In verse 33, our Lord tells us to actively *seek* to live our lives in such a manner that we may rule and reign with Christ when He comes in His glory to rule over the earth. Since this seeking can only occur through a saved spirit and a Christ-

controlled life, then only those that by faith are traveling on the "narrow way" can seek it. This seeking is not *only* to reach the goal. That is why God says seek first, not *only* the kingdom, *but also His righteousness*. We are to be holy, even as He is holy. This may seem like a tall order; nevertheless, God's goal is 100%. God promises to give the saved person all the power he needs to accomplish this perfection.

1 Peter 1:15-16

*But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;
Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

This righteousness of God is brought about by the constant washing of the water of the Word; this is God's method of ensuring a Christ-controlled life that cleanses and sanctifies the believer towards the ultimate goal of being holy, even as He is holy.

Ephesians 5:26

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

The joy that a Christian has by living this kind of life is not only the experience of a daily power and victory in Christ, but also a life that is free from worry and the problems of this world. God says in our text that He will supply all of our needs. These needs are, at the very least, food, drink, and clothing. God wants us to know about His abundant care for us, and to teach this, He uses the Greek word "prostithemi" – translated "added" in verse 33. The literal meaning of this word, however, is "to place additionally" or to *super-add*. By using this word, He is saying He doesn't just give us the meager substance of life, but rather He *super-adds*, or gives more than we need. In light of this, our Lord commands us not to worry (Matt. 6:25). Leave it all to Him, and He will super-supply us with our needs. Our portion is to "seek first"; i.e., let no earthly goals have priority over the goal of the kingdom and the Biblical method to win the race. For without righteous works, no believer will enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:20; 7:21; 16:27).

On the other hand, those Christians who do not live a life yielded to Christ will produce the unrighteous works of the *flesh* (workers of iniquity) which will place them in danger of being *excluded* from the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ warns us of some of these works in the following Scriptures:

- (1) Works of receiving false doctrines and traditions of men (Col. 2:8, 18).
- (2) Works of offense against a brother (Matt. 5:25-26).
- (3) Works that seek worldly riches (Luke 6:24).
- (4) Works that are done for high reputation (Luke 6:26).
- (5) Works of taking oaths (pledges, etc.) (James 5:12).
- (6) Works that deny Jesus in times of persecution (2Tim 2:12).
- (7) Works that are sensual and mirthful (Luke 6:25).
- (8) Works that are disobedient (through unfaithfulness, or "unbelief") (Heb. 4:11)

(9) Works that do not come up to the right standard (Matt. 5:20).

(10) Works of legalism (illustrated in circumcised Gentile believers) (Gal. 5:2-4; 6:13-15).

(11) The first work of disobedience: failing to be baptized (John 3:5).

(12) Failure to receive the Kingdom of God as a little child (Mat. 18:3-4); humility is an absolute prerequisite.

While a believer cannot enter the kingdom if he produces these unrighteous works, he must realize that he cannot in his *own* efforts do otherwise. For how can the flesh do away with the efforts of the flesh? In attempting to do so one would become as the Pharisees (self-righteous). Therefore, only Christ working *through* us (our new nature) can overcome and produce the necessary righteous works to qualify us for the ultimate entrance into the kingdom. And where does a believer get this necessary faith and power of Christ? Through the Word! For the Holy Spirit fills a believer's life to the same capacity as he is filled with the Word (James 1:21; Eph 5:18-19; Col. 3:16). This gives him the proper daily faith (Rom. 10:17) that is needed both to recognize and to confess any sins in his life (Heb.5:14; 1 John 1:9) and to trust Christ for all things.

We learn from the apostle Peter that the "purpose", or "end" goal of our faith is:

1 Peter 1:9

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Thus we see that the very purpose of our growing in faith is to the end that our souls may be saved. We learn from Romans that in order to grow in faith, it is necessary to "hear" the Word of God:

Romans 10:17

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

So how does God accomplish this salvation of our souls through hearing the word of God? This is the work the Holy Spirit does in the believer who feasts on the Word of God. This work is done automatically, but the believer first must hear the word by his own efforts. This is the "striving" a believer does to "enter in at the strait gate". Our portion is to read, study, meditate, hear, and feast on the Word of God every available moment of our lives, but with the necessary attitude of *obeying* what God says. His portion is to do the work, and thereby He will produce much fruit, and then "*herein is my Father glorified*", and then you will be His disciples.

John 15:8

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Consider the following verse:

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Why is it so important that the soul, and spirit, and body (the joints and marrow) be divided, or separated? It is because, as a result of the fall of Adam, our spirit became dead to God, and our soul and body became so intertwined as to lose the original purpose designed by God. Adam was so designed that his spirit, because it was alive and in constant communication with God, would have dominion over the soul and the body, and thus all three would operate in concert to glorify God and accomplish His purposes. When Adam fell, his soul and body took dominion over his now dead spirit (dead to God), and because of sin that had entered into his "body of death", Adam would now produce works according to the flesh, and according to "the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Peter 1:4).

At times it may appear as if the Word accomplishes very little. But the Word is like seed: everything depends on the treatment it receives. Some receive the Word with only "head knowledge" (gnosis), but it cannot be quickened there. The Word is meant for the heart (the will; the affections). The Word must be submitted to, must be lived, and must be acted out. When this is done it will manifest its living, quickening power. It is not we who have to make the Word alive. When, in faith in the life and power that is inherent in the Word, the heart yields itself in humble submission and honest desire to its action; it will prove itself to be life and power. This is the "power of His resurrection" that Paul refers to in Phillipians:

Philippians 3:10

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

The first action of God's Word is to wound, to cut, and to divide. The natural life has its seat in the soul; the spiritual and divine has its seat in the spirit. Sin has brought confusion and disorder; and the spirit is under the mastery of the soul (the natural life). God's Word divides and separates the spirit from the soul; and then commands that this "soul" (our carnal life) must die. (*For "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18).*) God's Word wakens the spirit to a sense of its destiny as the faculty for the unseen and the eternal. It brings the soul to the knowledge of itself as a captive to the power of sin. It cuts deep and sure, discovering the deep corruption of sin. As the knife of the surgeon who seeks to heal, it pierces even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, where it is needed. So the Word penetrates all; there is no part of the inner being to which it does not pass.

2 Peter 1:4

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Where are these great and precious promises? They are in the Word of God, and to the extent the believer feasts on the knowledge (epignosis) of God through His Word, we become partakers of God's very own divine nature. And then, as we grow into maturity, we are able to "escape the corruption that is in the world through lust", and thereby we are enabled by His Spirit to "lose our life" here on earth, and thus remain on the narrow road which leads to Salvation of the Soul. It is through this method that we fulfill the command of God that we should be holy, even as He is holy.

TEN THOUSAND PERCENT INTEREST AND MORE

Matthew 19:27-29

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have

followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

This passage records a remarkable statement given by Jesus concerning rewards in the coming kingdom. It was given in response to Peter's question which was "what shall we have therefore", or as we might say today, "what's in it for us"? To fully understand the occasion for this question, we must first understand the context of this chapter. Jesus had been teaching on the coming Kingdom of Heaven when, in verse 16, a rich man asked him, "*what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?*" The answer Jesus gave has confounded many Bible teachers and preachers who do not know the "keys of three". Jesus, in verse 17 told him that he must *do* something! That is, he must do works in order to enter into life! He did not say, "believe on me and thou shalt have eternal life", but rather He commanded him to keep the law; sell what he had; and give it to the poor - and then to follow Him (verse 18-20). Why did Jesus tell him to work instead of believe? Was He mistaken about how to be saved? Is Ephesians 2:8-9 wrong when it tells us "salvation is by grace through faith and not of works"? No; a thousand times, no!

The answer lies in the fact that Jesus was not instructing this man on how to have his *spirit* saved, but rather, how to have his *soul* saved, which would then lead to eternal life (life for the coming age). Jesus knew the man's spirit was already saved; else He would have instructed him his need to be born again, as He told Nicodemus in John 3:3.

There is an attitude here that one should keep in mind. And that is: the Jews of that day (especially the rich ones) believed that they were already spiritually saved and had God's blessings upon them to prove it. They belonged to God; they had the covenants of promise; they no longer worshipped idols. Their thoughts were that there was no reason for them not to be spiritually saved.

The rich man who came to Jesus, then, was seeking to do a work that would guarantee him a place in the kingdom. Jesus' answer to him is the same that He gives to the Church of today. "I must be first in all things in your life! First, you must *deny* yourself; then you must take up your *cross* and *follow Me*". When the rich man heard this, he became sorrowful and turned away. He had a very comfortable life, and he was unwilling to give it up ("to lose his life"). Therefore, as it was with this rich man (Matt. 19:22), so it is with most Christians in the Church today. The price to follow Jesus into the coming kingdom is too high! As a result of the rich man's turning away, Jesus tells us in the following verses (23-24) that it is very hard for a rich man (one that trusts in his riches) to enter the Kingdom of God (see also Pro. 18:11). He did not say that a rich man cannot be saved, but that it is very difficult for such a one to be granted entrance into the Kingdom of God at the Judgment Seat of Christ (this is Salvation of the Soul).

In light of this, the disciples were "exceedingly amazed" (verse 25), and Peter said, "*Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?*" Now for that blessed answer! In verse 28 He tells His disciples, "*that ye which followed me in the regeneration (the coming kingdom) when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye shall also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*".

Then, in Matthew 19:29, He tells us that every one (of the saved) who have followed Him into the kingdom by forsaking all will receive back a "*hundredfold*" or 10,000% interest of all that he lost, and then *inherit* eternal life. The inheritance of eternal life referred to here is the receiving of the resurrected, glorified body, which can never die again (and thus has eternal life), and then entering into the Kingdom.

In closing His remarks in verse 30, Jesus uses the expression that is used often to describe those who will gain reward or suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ "*Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first*". There are many who are first in this life – they are first in riches, and power, and fame; or even first in the Church here on earth, as are some famous pastors and evangelists. Many of these will be last in the Kingdom of Heaven, because they, like the rich man, would not give up their lives to follow Jesus – instead they sought after the trinkets the world has to offer. But, by the same token, many who are last in this life – last in riches, last in success, last in fame; perhaps even the humble servant who cleans the restroom in your Church – will be first in the Kingdom of Heaven, because they "lost" their lives here on earth, and opted to serve Jesus rather than seek the praises of men and the satisfaction this world offers.

The Promises of "Now" and "Then" Brought Together

Mark 10:28-31

Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

First of all, take note that the "eternal life" (life for the age) is received in the *next* age (in the world to come) – not this present age.

Both of the gospels of Mark and Luke record information given by Jesus to Peter that was not recorded in Matthew. The reason for this is that the scope of Jesus' answer in Matthew was only kingdom rewards. Whereas, in Matthew He speaks of a hundredfold being given in the kingdom as reward, in Mark, He speaks of a hundredfold being given *now*, in this time. This is our Lord's "super-added" blessings *here*, for all who will be granted eternal life *there*. Luke agrees with Mark by saying that there is no man that has left all for the sake of the Kingdom of God "*Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world [age] to come, life everlasting.*"

In light of these truths, why should a Christian who is having his soul saved worry about the needs of this world? Our Lord says that He will receive a "super-added" portion, a "manifold" portion, a "hundredfold" portion in this life that will more than meet his needs; and in the age to come he will be given great *reward*. No wonder our Lord said, "Take no thought for tomorrow" (Matt. 6:34). The sovereign God of heaven is supplying more than our needs, and directing our paths. Along with this, He causes us to produce good works that please Him and that will gain rewards (Eph. 2:10). Therefore, we should trust His Word and place no confidence in our own understanding. Believe that He is in every event and decision in your life, and He will be (Prov 3:5-6). Continue to spiritually feed on the Word.

But a word of caution here: in no way am I endorsing the erroneous doctrine of "health, wealth, and prosperity" that tickles the ears of so many believers today. God promises to supply our needs, not our wants. These needs may in some cases only be food, clothing, and shelter.

CHAPTER NINE

The Beginning of Wisdom

Proverbs 2:1-5

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; 4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; 5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

As our text teaches, all knowledge and wisdom is given to those believers who *receive* His Word, *hide* it in their hearts, *incline* their ears to it, *apply* their hearts to it, *lift* up their voices and *cry* for it, and diligently *seek* after it. However, in answering their prayers and fulfilling their desires, God does not first give to them knowledge and wisdom directly, but rather He gives the understanding of the *fear* of the Lord, which is declared to be the "*beginning* of all wisdom and knowledge." (Pro 9:10, Psa 111:10).

He who has the understanding of the *fear* of the Lord will have a fountain of life (Pro 14:27), riches, honor (Pro 22:4), satisfaction (Pro 19:23), and a strong confidence and safety for his children (Pro 14:26). He will hate evil, pride, arrogance, evil ways, perverse mouths (Pro 8:13); and the days of his life will be prolonged (Pro 10:27). The Apostle Paul understood this truth (Eph. 5:21), and the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, understood it also (Isa 11:2). And when the Churches of Judea began to comprehend and walk in this divine decree, they experienced rest, edification and comfort in the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31).

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

What is the understanding of the fear of the Lord? It is the proper understanding of the future events that surround the Judgment Seat of Christ to the degree that it drastically changes a believer's life. This is a reverential fear of not pleasing God. It is a fear of "suffering of loss"; a fear of the consequences of willful sin, i.e., unconfessed sin; a fear of the judgment of God that will come upon all the believers that have wasted their lives in the fulfillment of the things of this world; and a fear of the sentence of God's judgment that will last one thousand years.

On the other hand, the fear of the Lord is also the beginning of knowledge and wisdom that reveals the rewards that will be given to the faithful at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Rewards that are far above that which the human mind can conceive. Rewards that will not only be enjoyed in the coming kingdom age, but also throughout the eternal ages. To have this wisdom and the *hope of glory* that it produces, one must want it and seek after it more than anything else in this life.

Probably only a small portion of Christendom has ever understood this reverential *fear* of God beyond initial salvation (salvation of the spirit). The Church of these last days continues to spurn this teaching – clinging to the erroneous doctrine that all saved people will be equal in heaven regardless of how they lived their lives after they were saved.

Knowledge and Wisdom

The fear we are discussing is not the same fear that a lost person experiences when the Holy Spirit places him under conviction. That fear is the fear of eternal punishment for his sins – and, as such, should immediately cease when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ (rests in His finished work on the Cross). With this experience of salvation, the saved man will then experience a certain peace and limited knowledge of Jesus Christ that extends no further than the Cross and Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven. As he grows in Bible knowledge, he may learn about the Holy Spirit's work in his life, the rapture, and some knowledge of judgment, but usually with no understanding of reverential and experiential *fear of the Lord*. He clings to Romans 8:1, believing that he can no longer be judged for anything, and as such can live his life as he pleases.

These first truths to the saved described above are called the "first principles of Christ", or the *milk* doctrines of the Word (Heb. 5:13; 6:1). And after one learns and experiences them, he is to leave them and grow into the *meat* doctrines which produce perfection (Gr. meaning 'maturity') (Heb. 5:13-6:2). However, this growth into maturity cannot begin until the believer first understands the *fear* of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

Ephesians 1:15-19

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, ¹⁶ Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; ¹⁷ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: ¹⁸ The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

In this passage, the Apostle Paul wrote that he was praying a special prayer for the Ephesian Christians because of their demonstrated faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love toward all believers (growing in the Word to the saving of the soul). This prayer of Paul was that they might receive this "wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ". The Greek word that is translated knowledge here is "epignosis", which means *above-knowledge, or super-knowledge, or full-discernment*. This above-knowledge opens the inner eye of understanding for one to be able to see and know three things:

- (1) "The hope of His calling" - this is the great expectation and aspiration of the believer in *striving* to reach the *prize* of the high calling of God - the high calling of ruling and reigning with Christ, not only in His coming kingdom, but throughout the eternal ages.
- (2) "What is the riches of glory of His *inheritance* in the saints" - this is the fabulous and abundant splendor of wealth of the *inheritance* for those who will be co-heirs with Christ – the double portion.
- (3) "What the exceeding greatness of God's power is to usward who believe" - this is the great *experiential* power of God to those who believe and have this full discernment. This is the knowledge that Christ on the Cross not only delivered us from the penalty of sin, but that He delivered us from the power of sin over us; that the victory He achieved can be ours in this life through the resurrection power that resides within us to cause us to overcome sin, and the flesh, and the world.

DIVISIONS AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Full-discernment (Gr. 'epignosis') begins with the ability to use Scripture in order to rightly *divide* the doctrines that are connected to and surround the Judgment Seat of Christ. These doctrines not only teach the future dividing of all believers into the *two* major groups (those that gain reward as opposed to those who suffer loss), but they also sub-divide all believers into *ranks* within these two groups.

On the other hand, those who have only knowledge (Gr. 'gnosis') cannot rightly divide or see these deeper truths, and as such, assume that the Judgment Seat of Christ is nothing more than a future place where all Christians will be judged and then made equal with one another. To try to further justify this position, they may use Rev. 4:10 as a proof text to teach that all Christians after the judgment will gain crowns and then humbly throw them back at the feet of Jesus. These twenty-four elders *are indeed* representative of the Church (this will be later discussed in the chapter "The Things Which Will Happen Hereafter"), and they *are paying homage* to the One who gave them their crowns. But they are *not relinquishing* their crowns; these are the same elders who appear time after time later in Revelation (Rev 5:8; 5:14; 11:16; 19:4.) Instead, they are exhibiting abject humility and submission to the One Who is above all and Who is Most Worthy.

Full-knowledge teaches that at the Judgment Seat of Christ all believers will be divided into *two* basic groups for the purpose of gaining crowns, or suffering loss of reward. These two basic groups are known by many descriptive titles in the Word. The following is a list of these:

(1) Gnosis vs. Epignosis

First, God uses the terms "gnosis" vs. "epignosis". Here a division is made on the basis of whether the Christian has only "gnosis" (Greek word for knowledge), or if he obtained, while in this life, "epignosis" (Greek word for above or fullness of knowledge). Gnosis is always connected to the *milk* doctrines of the Word. Gnosis is the knowledge of the new birth; the Lord Jesus Christ, and as such embraces the *Cross*, and the "first principle of Christ" (salvation of the spirit).

Epignosis on the other hand, is *experiential* full-knowledge. It causes one to have a life full of *hope* - a hope of having the privilege to share the glory of Christ at His appearing when He establishes His kingdom. It is this hope that purifies the believer's life (1 John 3:3).

1 John 3:3

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

This full-knowledge then embraces the truths surrounding the Second Coming and describes a Christian who is on the narrow road to obtaining a *mature* faith (Salvation of the Soul). In order for one to have this full-knowledge, he must first be saved and then grow to understand it (1Tim 2:4).

1 Timothy 2:4

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

This knowledge is not only necessary for the salvation of his *soul*, but also for the manifold grace and peace of God for this life (2Peter 1:2).

2 Peter 1:2

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

(2) Called v. Chosen

Secondly, God uses the terms "called" and "chosen" to describe these same two groups (Matt. 22:14). The word "called" in the Greek is the word "kletos" - meaning *invited*, or appointed (specifically a saint, or one who is saved). All Christians are called (Rom. 1:6).

The word "chosen" in the Greek is the word "eklektos" meaning *select* (or by implication, favorite or elect). The literal meaning, however, is "out-called", or those who have been *called out of the called*. Thus, the selected ones who will rule and reign with Jesus Christ in His coming kingdom are those who are selected out from those who are saved.

Thus, we have the well-known verse: *For many are called, but few are chosen* (Matt. 22:14).

(3) Wise vs. Foolish

Thirdly, there is the division of the "wise vs. the foolish". These are described in Matthew:

Matthew 7:24-27

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Thus, the distinction is made between the wise and the foolish based on whether or not they *do* the things found in the Word of God.

(4) The Church, (Body of Christ) vs. Church of the Firstborn (Bride of Christ)

Fourthly, God uses the expression "body of Christ" as opposed to the term "Church of the Firstborn". Contrary to that which most scholars have taught, the body of Christ and the Church of the Firstborn are not the same throughout eternity. Rather, the Church of the Firstborn is taken out of the body of Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ, thereby forming *two* bodies. This in no way corrupts the scriptural teaching that the body is one, as taught in Ephesians 4:4. For both bodies are still the one invisible body of Christ in the spirit. Notwithstanding, the visible body of Christ in this present time is but one body and is called the Body of Christ. However, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, this body will become *two* visible bodies when God calls-out (chooses - Gr. 'eklektos') of this body, the Church of the Firstborn.

To help us to understand this, God uses a type (spiritual pattern) in the Old Testament to teach us of the unity of one body becoming two, and while as two bodies, are in the unity of one.

1Corinthians 15:45

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

In this verse of Scripture, God calls our attention to Christ as the second Adam. With this connection, we are to understand that Adam is a "type" or foreshadow of Christ. Thus, in God's dealing with Adam before his fall (particularly in the formation of Eve) we can see and understand the formation of the bride of Jesus Christ, the second Adam. For as the first Adam had a bride, so will the second Adam.

Consider this:

(1) As the first Adam had a literal, physical body, so the last Adam (Christ) has a literal, physical body.

(2) As God put Adam to sleep in a garden and opened his side, so He put Jesus to sleep (to death) in a garden (Calvary was located in a garden) and opened His side, i.e., by a Roman spear.

(3) As God took a portion of Adam's first body to "make" (Heb. meaning 'build') his bride, so is He calling out a portion of the last Adam's body to build His bride (Matt. 16:18).

(4) As Adam's second body (his bride) was made from a rib, so is the last Adam's (Christ's) second body being made from blood and water (symbolic of initial redemption [1Peter 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5; Heb. 13:12; Titus 3:5] and continuous cleansing through absorption of the Word [Eph. 5:25; John 15:3; 17:17], confession and obedience [1John 1:7-9]).

(5) Therefore, as Adam had *two* bodies, (Gen 5:2), so will Christ have *two* bodies, one called out, or taken out of the other. The first body of Christ is made up of all the saved who were judicially placed in Christ on the Cross through faith. The second body of Christ will be made up from a portion of the first, and called out at the Judgment Seat of Christ. At this stage, the name of this second body is the "called-out one", i.e., the "bride of Christ", or "the Church of the Firstborn". Consider the following verses:

Ephesians 5:25-32

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. ²⁹ For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: ³⁰ For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. ³¹ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. ³² This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.

Likewise, so shall the "Church of the Firstborn" leave the "body of Christ" and shall be joined to Christ as His bride, and "*so they two shall be one flesh.*" Those called out of Christ's Body at the Judgment Seat of Christ are those who have been "*cleansed and sanctified with the washing of water by the word*", and these are presented to Himself "*a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that*

it should be holy and without blemish". On the earth, all the saved are members of the body of Christ, and all have the potential to be called out at the Judgment Seat of Christ to be His bride.

Hence Paul's fervent prayer in Philippians 3:

Philippians 3:8-11

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss (he chooses to "lose" his life) for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ (a reward), ⁹ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: ¹⁰ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; ¹¹ If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Here Paul clearly links the "knowledge" of Christ (in this instance, the Greek word "ginosko", which to know absolutely) with obtaining the prize, i.e., the "resurrection of the dead" (also called the "first" resurrection in Rev. 20:5-6). Notice also that he "has suffered the loss of all things" (the things of this world); that is, he has "denied himself", and has "taken up his cross" ("being made conformable unto His death") and has "lost his life" here on earth, that he may gain it at the Judgment Seat and be a part of the "first resurrection".

CHAPTER TEN

The Two-fold Nature of "Eternal Life" in the English Bible

Have We Been Misled by a Mistranslation in the English Bible?

In this chapter, I hope to state, illustrate, enforce, and apply the truth of the "Twofold Meaning of Eternal Life" as I find it in the word of God, especially in the New Testament. By the above heading I mean to convey the thought - the truth - that the phrase "Eternal Life" is used in the Scriptures in a dualistic or "twofold" sense.

In the first sense it designates the free gift of God to the person that believes on Jesus Christ as his only Savior from sin. In the second sense it means - no longer the free gift - but the **prize** of which Paul speaks in Phil. 3:7-14. This prize is the gracious privilege granted to believers of sharing in the glory of the first resurrection and the unspeakable blessedness of Christ's Messianic-Theocratic-Millennial Kingdom in the age to come. (Matt. 19:27-30.) This prize is awarded only to believers, who, like Joshua and Caleb, like John and Paul, wholly follow the Lord,

The gift of Eternal Life potentially contains the prize; but that potential may never be developed in the present period of the believer's probation - and if such be the case, he will miss the Kingdom and its glory in the coming age. The development of that potential is inherent in the free gift of salvation, but its application is not automatic: it depends on the willingness of the believer to follow the Lord in obedience.

Dualistic combinations run all through the Bible. They take various forms as to moral character. They may be synthetic, or antithetic.

In a synthetic duality, the two distinct ideas are part of a whole, but they are not opposed to each other. They are different applications of the same thing under different circumstances. An example would be Evening Star and Morning Star - they are both the planet Venus seen at different times. The Apostle Paul gets into this when he discusses the hand and the foot, although separate and distinct, as still part of the whole - the body.

In an antithetic duality, the two distinct ideas are diametrically opposed. Examples would be life and death, light and darkness, good and evil.

Biblical examples of antithetic and synthetic duality are given in this chapter. The point of this chapter is to show that the term "eternal life" has two distinct applications depending on the context in which it is used.

As examples of synthetic dualism in the Old Testament we may take Abraham and Sarah, or Isaac and Rebecca. In the New Testament we have Christ and His Bride; the Spirit and the Word; Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Examples of antithetic dualism are found in Abel and Cain, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, the Church and the World, Grace and Law.

There is one special point, under the head of synthetic dualism, where the leaders of the people, both in the Jewish and Christian dispensations have, at fearful cost, failed God. This is the grand synthesis of the two advents of Christ. The Jewish outlook on the future saw but one advent of Messiah, and that coming was to be in glory to establish His Kingdom and deliver the children of Abraham from Gentile domination and oppression. They had no room for a humble, suffering Messiah preparatory to the glory of His Messianic Rule. The Levitical offerings, as well as passages like Isaiah 53, ought to have prevented them from making this error. The Old Testament everywhere presents the Messiah as reaching His throne through suffering (Psalms 22 and 89.)

As did the Pharisees at His first coming, so also the people of God in *this* dispensation have no room for the thought of the same Christ still suffering for the truth's sake through the members of His mystical body. The loss to vital Christianity has been enormous, as carnal Christians will discover to their sorrow when they stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (2Cor. 5:10.)

2 Timothy 2:12

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

The Church today admits the two advents, but so completely disassociates them from their historical and prophetic settings as to rob them of their synthetic beauty, power, and glory; and also of their spiritual and eschatological significance.

Associated with this, and growing out of it, comes the subject of this chapter. It seems to me the Christian Church has made one of the greatest mistakes in her whole career. This is her failure to recognize and emphasize the "Dualism of Eternal Life" and its corollaries. When the Church lost this truth - so central and vital to both Testaments - is not for certain. I doubt, however, if the date was later than the third century A.D.

It is perfectly clear to my mind that the exegesis of Luke 18:18-30, as presented elsewhere in this writing, has established the fact that the Rich Young Ruler is *not* a sinner seeking salvation from the penalty of sin, and seeking the free gift of eternal life; but he is a real son of Abraham seeking how he may be assured of a place in Messiah's coming Kingdom. And it is equally certain that Peter's question and Christ's reply (Matt. 19:27-30) constitute an extension and amplification of the subject introduced by the Rich Young Ruler. In addition to this, Christ's two replies indicate that "eternal life" and the "Kingdom of God" as used here are synonymous expressions.

First, notice that Jesus made no distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven:

Matthew 19:23-24

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

(The numbered notes in bold annotated below and following are referenced in certain tables which are presented at the end of the chapter.)

(Note 1) - Then, in response to Peter's question, "*what shall we have therefore?*", Jesus said:

Matthew 19:28-29

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Let us examine closely the two terms in the phrase "eternal life." There are three Greek words in the New Testament all translated in the A.V. and the R.V. by one English word, "life", and this leads to confusion. The three Greek words are "*bios*", "*psuke*" and "*zoe*."

"*Bios*" occurs eleven times in the New Testament. It is especially associated with man's day, and usually refers to the material or sensuous side of human existence. Thus: "He divided unto them his *living*." (Luke 15:12.) So likewise in 2 Tim. 2:4; 1 John 2:16.

The Greek word "*psuke*" occurs one hundred and six times and is translated "life", or "soul." It expresses the idea of the natural life in man, and generally with the suggestion of subjection to sin and death. Thus: "*If any man will save His life he shall lose it.*" (See Matt. 16:25; 10:38; Mark 8:37.) This term is also used to express the thought of the natural life of Christ as laid down in His atoning death (Matt. 20:28.) The adjective *aionios* (usually translated "eternal", or "everlasting") is never found in association with "*bios*" or "*psuke*." The reason is that the life expressed by these words is subject to mood, time, and circumstance. And this is the *only* "life" which man by his own nature alone can know.

The third term is "*zoe*." It occurs in the N.T. one hundred and thirty-four times. In its Divine original this life is uncreated and indestructible. It is "*that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.*" 1 John 1:2; John 1:4. This is the life imparted in the new birth. But its latent potential can only be developed by the crucifixion of the self-life ("*psuke*"), and by continual fellowship with Christ as the despised and rejected One; and also as the Victor over sin and death and Hell. This distinction between the soul and the spirit, and between the "*psuke*" and the "*zoe*", both so fundamental to biblical interpretation, is ignored and virtually denied by modern theology; and indeed by historical and systematic theology generally.

What I want to prove now is that the phrase "Eternal Life" is used in the Scriptures to convey two quite distinct conceptions. It is:

(1) The free gift of God to every sinner who sincerely and scripturally receives Jesus Christ as his Savior from the guilt and penalty of sin; and

(2) It is used to designate the blessedness of the Millennial Reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Note 2) - I will take two passages from the Epistle of Paul to the Romans to illustrate this difference. In Romans 6:23 it is expressly stated that "*The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" At first glance, this is so clear that it needs no comment; that is, if you are comparing the unsaved with the saved. But if you will review the entire passage in Romans 6, you will see that Paul is addressing believers who are now "dead to sin"; nowhere in the passage is Paul referring to unbelievers. Neither is he comparing unbelievers to believers in the verse in question. Instead, Paul is still speaking to believers, and he is telling them that if they continue to sin, and do not repent of the sins

and receive forgiveness according to 1John 1:9, then the wages for these sins is death – that is, death at the Judgment Seat of Christ – the "hurt of the second death" (this is discussed in more detail later in this book.) The verse could be amplified to read as such:

The wages of sin is death, *nevertheless* the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Greek word ("*de*" – Strong's 1161) translated "but" can also be translated as "nevertheless", and in fact is translated as such 12 times in the New Testament (Matthew 14:9, Acts 27:11, Romans 15:15 - just to name a few.) So Paul is saying that the wages of sin, for the believer, is death for the coming age; nevertheless, the gift of God, which cannot be revoked, is eternal life in the ages to come for that same believer. Please consider this carefully.

(Note 3) In Romans 5:20-21, we have the following: *"Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded grace did much more abound; that as sin has reigned unto death even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."*

In the former case "eternal life" is a gift to be had by a sinner for the simple taking, regardless of his past record. Rom. 6:23 comprehends the simple fact that salvation is provided and freely offered. But Rom. 5:21 carries the thought farther.

Sin did more than just come in - it *abounded*. Therefore God must meet this and provide a means whereby the reign of grace will *abound* – to overtake and exceed the power of sin and death in every individual who so desires. At the Cross God damned (katakrino) sin in the flesh; and thus Christ, having spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it (the Cross) (Rom. 8:3; Col. 2:15.)

But how did Christ win this victory? By grace? No; there was no grace for Him. He was made sin for us. He met the demands of the Law to the fullest extent by a life of absolute surrender to God. Thus was grace made possible for sinners - grace for pardon, and also for deliverance. Grace must do in the individual what sin has been doing - manifesting its power to control and direct the energies of the person. As sin reigned through an unholy life ("*psuke*"); so must grace reign through a holy life ("*zoe*"); and if it does, the reward is "Eternal Life" in the coming Messianic Kingdom - but not otherwise.

A man cannot live a holy life until he is born again and is in possession of the *free gift* of eternal life. The *gift* is the "blade", but the *prize* is the full corn in the ear. This is expressed in Rom. 5:17. *"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ."* Did grace reign in the Galatians? No. The result then is exclusion from the Millennial Kingdom (Gal. 5:19-21.) And this is the truth which is expressly taught in the following passage:

Romans 5:8-10

But God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of His son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Here in the most explicit terms we have the doctrine of a twofold salvation:

1. The believer was saved from the penalty of sin and justified the moment he believed in Christ. The verb "were reconciled" is in the aorist tense, and indicates a past act definite in time and place:

- (a) *Judicially*, when the reconciliation was effected by Christ on the Cross; and
- (b) *Actually*, when the believer received Christ as his Savior.

This provides a solid basis on which grace *may* operate and abound subjectively. *I say, "may" - for there are conditions which the believer must fulfill.*

2. These conditions having been met, the process of sanctification begins, and thus *"we shall be saved by His life."* As to conditions see Luke 9:23; 11:28; 14:25-35. *"He that endureth to the end shall be saved."* Matt. 24:13. This is the path into "eternal life"; that is, the Messianic Kingdom.

Luke 9:23

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

(Note 4) - The above interpretation is further confirmed by the prepositions employed in Rom. 6:23 and 5:17-21. In the former passage the words, "in Christ Jesus our Lord"; the preposition is "en" with dative of the place, or locality, where the gift is found without any reference to the way in which it is procured, or how it is to be developed. But in the latter the preposition is "dia" with the genitive: "by Jesus Christ our Lord" indicating that it is not by the death of Christ merely, that the *second* stage of salvation is to be effected; but by His continual intercession for us at the right hand of God, and by the continuous impartation of His resurrection life by the Holy Spirit. And these are conditioned upon unswerving faith on the believer's part.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through [in] Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:17-21

For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. 20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Note 5) In John 3:16 we have the dualism expressed in the unity of one outward form, and on the principal that the greater includes the lesser. This verse is usually understood to speak only of the free gift of life in Christ. If God so loved the world that He made provision in Christ for the pardon and justification of sinners only, that would be wonderful - *but He did far more than that!* He made provision that grace might abound to, and in, and through the believer, so that once saved he might not perish but have eternal life in the Messianic Kingdom. "Then believers may perish", you ask?" Of course they may.

But in what sense? It is in the sense that they are excluded from the Kingdom and have no part in the glory of the first resurrection, being still held by the power of death. But the believer does not thereby lose what he had in the first place - the gift of eternal life. *I pray you will grip this thought firmly.*

It is here that the respective theories of the Calvinist and the Arminian break down. They fail to explain and correlate the facts.

But here arises a new problem: If "Eternal Life" as the prize differs from "Eternal Life" as the gift; and also, if "Eternal Life" as the prize is synonymous with the coming Messianic Kingdom, and that Kingdom is limited to 1,000 years, it follows logically that the adjective *aionios* does not mean what it says in English. In other words, that the translations in both A.V. and R.V. are misleading. This is what I hope to prove.

Greater light will establish the conclusion that, so far as its essential meaning is concerned, it can be so translated and interpreted as either, depending upon the context. I will illustrate this in a comparative-table shown later in this chapter. But as this is not necessary in order to establish the main line of argument, I have decided to make no attempt to carry the discussion to its fullest limit. But inasmuch as the traditional eschatology is built almost exclusively on the assumption that "eternal" is the proper translation of *aionios*, it will follow that if this can be proven false, and therefore unscriptural, the generally accepted views of the Churches of Christendom concerning the future state of both saved and unsaved will have to be abandoned. This is a very solemn matter and deserving of the most serious and painstaking consideration.

I am quite well aware that here we are on keenly contested ground; and, also, just as certain that in this very matter the last word has not been spoken. And as in the past, so now and in the days to come, we can count on the great enemy of truth and righteousness to still work through his favorite weapons - prejudice, custom, traditions, gratuitous assumption, and preconceived notions - to keep out the light of God's word on this great subject.

And I may here remark that what will most offend orthodox readers in this study is not what is said concerning the future state of the *unsaved*, but of the *saved*. Thus I have to meet the force of the orthodox view in two opposite directions.

What is the meaning of the Greek adjective *aionios*? Because most religious people depend largely, even chiefly, on human authority rather than on what the word of God says, it may be well to note a few points in this connection by way of preliminary remarks and evidence. Note the following data:

1. Rotherham, Young and others, translate *aionios* not by "eternal" or "everlasting", but by some such compound as age-lasting, age-abiding, or age-enduring, all of which have the same meaning. Now it is self-evident that age-lasting means lasting while the age lasts. And as every age has clearly defined boundaries - those being "from which" and "to which" - it follows that in the Greek *aionios* and the English *eternal* we have two entirely different conceptions - one definitely limited, and the other unlimited, as to time. But both cannot be right. A limited eternity and an unlimited age are oxymorons - impossible conceptions. You may as well talk of an unlimited yard stick as an unlimited age. Notwithstanding, it seems these good men apparently still did not see the necessary implications of their rendering.
2. Trench in his work on "Greek Synonyms" admits that *aionios* sometimes has a limited significance.

3. Dr. Vincent in his "Word Studies in the New Testament" is most emphatic in his assertion that *aionios* never means *eternal* as English readers use the word.

Thus it becomes evident that in my contention for a more exact rendering of this Greek adjective I am not without the support of scholarship. But I have more conclusive evidence than this.

Some Positive Facts

1. It is a fact that when the A.V. was made the Latin language was far better known, and more extensively used, than the Greek; and therefore the translators were greatly influenced both by the extensive use of Latin and by the Latin Versions then in use. Beza's translation and the Vulgate both translate *aionios* by "aeternus", the cognate noun being "aeternitas"; this is the source of our English "eternal" and "eternity." This looks very suspicious. From the above facts it is as clear as the light of noon-day that the King James Translators, instead of going back to the original Greek and translating the Greek *aionios*, went to the Latin Vulgate and translated the Latin *aeternus*. If they had gone to the Greek, and acted as befits scholars, they would have given us the same translation as Rotherham and Young, namely, "age-lasting." Let the reader ponder the force of this argument. Make sure that you see the point.

2. It is equally a fact that the theology of the West was not that of the Greek Church, but that of Roman Catholicism. It was Latin theology.

And just as it is beyond doubt that the revisers, translators, and lexicographers were chiefly influenced by the Latin language and Latin translations, so is it equally beyond doubt that the theologians of the Reformation were far more influenced by Latin Theology than by the word of God. I admit that the theology of Calvin was derived from Saint Augustine, modernized and extended; and the same is true of the Anglican Church's Thirty Nine Articles. From this it follows that the current eschatology is not Greek, but Latin; not Biblical but traditional; and not Christian, but pagan in some of its most essential features. In this connection the reader would do well to look into "The Church, The Churches, and The Mysteries", by D. M. Pember.

Let us for a moment examine the condition of Latin Theology at the time when the traditional eschatology was fully established. I will quote from Milman's Latin Christianity. Let us also remember that the first four great Church Councils *refused* to formulate any Credal statement on eschatological lines. Nevertheless it is to Augustine, especially, that we must trace the roots and the foundation of the system of eschatology which has prevailed in the Protestant Churches since the reformation. In this connection Milman says:

"Augustinianism was not merely the expression of the universal Christianity of the age as administering to, as being in itself the fuller, fervent, continuous excitement of the religious sentiment - it was closely allied with the two great characteristic tendencies of Latin Christianity. Latin Christianity, in its strong sacerdotal system, in its rigid and exclusive theory of the Church, at once admitted and mitigated the more repulsive parts of the Augustinian theology. Predestinarianism itself, to those at least within the pale, lost most of its awful terrors. The Church was the predestined assemblage of those to whom and to whom alone salvation was possible; the Church scrupled not to surrender the rest of mankind to that inexorable damnation entailed upon the human race by the sin of their first parents. As the Church, by the jealous exclusion of all heretics, drew around itself a narrower circle; this startling limitation of the divine mercies was compensated by the great extension of its borders, which now comprehended all other baptized Christians. The only point in this theory at which human nature uttered a feeble remonstrance was the abandonment of infants, who never knew the distinction between good and evil, to eternal fires. The heart of Augustine wrung from his reluctant reason, which trembled at its

own inconsistency, a milder damnation in their favor. But some of his more remorseless disciples disclaimed the illogical softness of their master.

Through the Church alone, and so through the hierarchy alone, man could be secure of that direct agency of God upon his soul, after which it yearned with irrepressible solicitude. The will of man surrendered itself to the clergy, for on them depended its slavery or its emancipation, as far as it was capable of emancipation. In the clergy, divine grace, the patrimony of the Church, was vested, and through them distributed to mankind. Baptism, usually administered by them alone, washed away original sin; the other rites and sacraments of which they were the exclusive ministers, were still conveying, and alone conveying, the influences of the Holy Ghost to the more or less passive soul. This objective and visible form as it were, which was assumed for the outward workings of God upon the mind and heart, by the certitude and security which it seemed to bestow, was so unspeakably consolatory, and relieved especially the less reflective mind from so much doubt and anxiety, that mankind was disposed to hail with gladness - rather than examine with jealous suspicion - these claims of the hierarchy. Thus the Augustinian theology coincided with the tendencies of the age towards the growth of the strong sacerdotal system; and the sacerdotal system reconciled Christendom with the Augustinian theology."

- Milman's Works. vol. I, page 171.

No student of ecclesiastical history will doubt the accuracy and the literal truthfulness of the above description by Milman of the condition of Christendom in the Middle Ages. And the ability of the clergy to keep the people in abject submission to their authority depended more than anything else on their boasted power over the souls of men after they had left the body. For this purpose it was essentially necessary to formulate and boldly enunciate a system of eschatology which would, if the clergy so willed, fix irrevocably the future destiny of the soul. And not only so, but it was necessary to so manipulate those portions of Scripture which threatened future judgment on the believer, in case of disobedience and unbelief, as to make them apply not to Christians but to sinners. And the same necessity exists today as we shall see later.

But while Latin Christianity wielded mighty power for many centuries, it did so because the human mind during those centuries was sleeping the sleep of death; hence the arbitrary power of the clergy (and at the same time their gross immorality.) Falsehood and superstition can only flourish in an atmosphere of intellectual lethargy and moral paralysis. Consequently, as soon as there came, in the good providence of God, the dawn of the Renaissance in the 14th century, Latin Theology could not face the light of even a morally barren intellectual awakening. From that time Latin Christianity began to wane. Then the process of illumination received a mighty impetus from the Reformation under Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and Knox.

Blessed, however, as was this work of God and man, it went neither deep enough, nor far enough; and as a result many of the most pernicious features of Augustinian theology and Latin Christianity survived the Reformation, and continue to this day to darken the heavens and benumb the moral and spiritual sensibilities of God's people; and thereby prove an insuperable barrier in the way of the progress of vital Christianity. Nevertheless, God is getting out of the world His "*seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.*" By the grace of God I hope to help progress this good work. The conclusion we can draw from the above is simply this:

It was absolutely essential to Augustinian theology to mistranslate the Greek adjective *aionios*, and put on it a meaning which the Greek will not for a moment allow in its respective applications to salvation and judgment. And that which was essential to Augustinian theology was equally essential to Latin Christianity from the days of Augustine to those of Calvin, Luther and Zwingli. And the same necessity exists in the Reformed Theology from then till the present. To say nothing of other words, the Calvinist

simply cannot, dare not, face an honest and truthful interpretation of the two frequently occurring words with which we are now dealing, namely, "eternal life."

4. It is a fact that *aionios* is derived from the noun *aion*. By means of this latter word and its compounds the Greeks expressed their conceptions of time, past, present and future. No language can get along without some such word, or words. F.W. Grant in his "Facts and Theories as to a Future State" says *aion* is sometimes used for a limited time, and sometimes for unlimited time, namely, eternity. Others, such as Dr. Vincent in his "Word Studies" emphatically deny the latter construction. The Greek *aion* may designate any period of time from the duration of human life up to the full length of an age in the history of a given nation; and it may also be used to denote the eternal ages (eternity), depending on the context. From the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt to the first advent of Christ is an age covering a period of 1,491 years; and the present age has already lasted over 2,000 years. Gal. 1:4 should read "this present evil age." The Holy Spirit in Rev. 20:1-4 tells us that the age to follow this one will last a thousand years. For this reason, we call it the Millennium (mille being a thousand.) The term *aion* appears in the following combinations: For the age; for the ages; for the age of the ages, and for the ages of the ages.

5. Why did the Revisers of the A.V. insert, or rather, retain the word "world" in Matt. 28:20? They make Christ say: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." But what He did say was: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." In reply to Peter's question, He promised to those of His followers who were faithful to Him during His absence, that He would give great reward in the age (not world) to come; plainly implying that those who were unfaithful would not share in the rewards, and, as He indicates in other passages, will not even share the blessedness of the coming age and Kingdom. I repeat the question: Why did the Revisers translate *aion* as world, instead of age? Because the Postmillennial theory of interpretation stands completely condemned before the correct rendering; and with its fall the traditional eschatology must also fall.

6. The primary and essential significance of *aionios* is that of time, but it also can denote quality. In such expressions as the "eternal Spirit", or the "eternal God", *aionios* conveys the thought of existence, or being, which is above the limitations of time and the accident of circumstance, and is a quality inherent in Deity. Eternity is one of God's attributes; and is therefore always latent and implied in the names of the Deity, and wherever this term appears in relation to Deity it is proper to translate it as "eternal."

7. But as we have noted above, it is not always proper to render it as such elsewhere. We will now examine this term where it is applied otherwise than to the names of Deity.

Hebrews 6:1-2

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrines of Christ, let us go on unto spiritual maturity; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God; of the doctrines of baptisms and of laying on of hands, and resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Hebrews 6:9

And being made perfect He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.

(Note 6) Here we have the antithetical terms "Eternal Judgment" and "Eternal Salvation." Turn up what orthodox commentary you may, practical or critical, or listen to whatever orthodox preacher you may, and

they will all give their united testimony that the former has reference to the eternal damnation of the unsaved, and the latter to the eternal bliss of believers.

Will the reader please pardon me if I seem presumptuous when I affirm that this is all wrong, and utterly contrary to the principles of sound exegesis; and at the same time subversive of truth and righteousness? What I am about to prove is that both statements have reference to believers only, and are to be realized in the age to come; that is, within the limits of one thousand years. They have no reference to eternity except by implication. And surely it is evident that *believers* cannot be eternally damned and eternally saved. The two ideas are mutually exclusive. And it is manifest that if this position can be established as scriptural, the traditional eschatology, as to both the saved and the unsaved, will be undermined and must fall in irreparable ruin.

Fact is the ruthless enemy of fiction. God's great instrument in religion is truth; whereas the Devil's is fiction - that is, imitation of truth. Truth is, and was, and shall be, because God is, and was, and shall be. Fiction is something manufactured for the occasion and is successful only so far as it has the appearance of reality. The traditional eschatology has a little truth and a great mass of fiction.

Five Facts

1. The Bible divides all men into two classes - the saved and the unsaved.
2. It subdivides the saved into two classes - the carnal who live according to the flesh, and the spiritual who live according to the spirit. Rom. 8:13-14.
3. It presents the Kingdom of God, or of heaven, in two phases, one as in the present age when the King is absent and sin abounds in the world; the other as it shall be in the age to come, the King being present and grace abounding in all the world. While the King is absent the Devil is present as the world's ruler; and when the King is present the Devil will be absent. Rev. 19:20; 20:1-6.
4. The Bible explicitly affirms that all believers are in the Kingdom in its present phase; but carnal believers will not be able to enter the Kingdom in glory in the age to come. Gal. 5:19-21; Matt. 5:20.
5. The state in which believers die is that in which they will come before Christ to be judged. This judicial process may issue either in eternal (age-lasting) salvation, or eternal (age-lasting) judgment, according to Heb. 5:9; and 6:2. Let the reader note that we are here using the word "eternal", not in its English sense, but as a translation of *aionios*, that is, age-lasting, or lasting while the age lasts.

Before coming directly to our examination of *aionios*, please consider this: we have seen the teaching of the Westminster Standards and of Protestantism generally as to the future state of believers. They say that at death the believer passes immediately into the presence of God and never can know any future judgment or sorrow. This is another of these flesh-pleasing fictions of the Middle Ages devised by priestcraft.

We may affirm, as a general and universal principal, that God, as a moral necessity inherent in His holiness, will not bestow any gift, either external or internal, on man without holding him strictly accountable for the use he makes of it. Why should the free gift of eternal life be an exception? But as a matter of fact, it is universally assumed to be so. This is a great mistake.

How very emphatic is Col. 3:25: "*But He that doeth wrong* (assuming that he has not made it right in accordance with 1 John 1:9) *shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons.*" Surely that is plain enough. Those who hold the theory in question say it is the believer's works and not his person that is to be judged. Is it conceivable that an evil work, apart from the person who does it, can be judged, and the sentence executed and justice satisfied thereby? How would the theory work in civil jurisprudence? Suppose society should say, "We will let the murderer go free, but we will judge and punish the deed." But, says one of the advocates of orthodox eschatology: "The believer's sins were all judged at Calvary." I grant this is true for the eternal ages – but not necessarily true for the age to come. What then? Is Christ the minister of sin?

Was God's purpose in the atonement to put a premium on sinning; or was it that Christians might not sin? (1 John 2:1.) The theory is essentially antinomian. Paul met it in his day as when he said, "*Shall we sin then because we are not under the law but under grace?*", and meets the thought with an emphatic "*God forbid.*" Christ bore the believer's sin and sins on the cross judicially. But this will not save the believer from sinning; nor from reaping as he sows - both in this life, and in the age to come.

God took Israel to be His people while yet in Egypt and said to Pharaoh, "*Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness*" (Exodus 5:1.) They all came under the blood and were saved by faith in the blood of the sacrifice, but because of unbelief and disobedience they were overthrown in the wilderness and thus failed to enter the Promised Land. Paul takes up this same thought and shows that experience of Israel was typical of a like state of unbelief and disobedience among God's people in the present Church Age, and affirms that it will be followed by similar chastisement and judgment *now*, and in the *age to come* (1Cor. 10:1-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Heb. 2:1-3.) In the last passage the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwells on the comparison, the type and the anti-type, and draws the very solemn inference:

Hebrews 2:1

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip; for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

Thus we see that salvation is dual, or two-fold - first from the penalty of sin, and second from the power of sin - and these agree with and condition the label "eternal life" either as the gift or as the prize. It is salvation in this second sense that the Holy Spirit is speaking of in Heb. 1:14; 2:3; and 5:9; and it is this that Christ has in view in Matt. 7:13-14; 24:13; and Luke 13:24. The two classes of believers are described as to character in Matt. 7:24-27:

1. Those who hear His words and do them (vs. 24), and
2. Those who hear His words and do not do them (vs. 26.)

Very few believers really hear Christ's words and do them, and thus they build on sand, while true believers dig deep and build on the rock (Luke 6:46-49.)

In Romans 11:14-24 the Holy Spirit warns Gentile believers that if they do not abide in Christ, they too shall be cut off. And this has been the actual state of the Church as an organization since the fourth century.

Romans 11:21

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

And what is it for members of the Church to be "cut off"? I am assuming the Church to be made up of people who are saved in the first degree (Salvation of the Spirit.) It is (a) to be put out of fellowship with Christ and the Divine Trinity here and now; and (b) later to be excluded from the Messianic Kingdom for one thousand years. The Holy Spirit enumerates the works of the flesh, deadly personal sins - sins which have characterized the Church from the days of the Apostles to the present time - and then declares most solemnly that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21.) I have often seen these words quoted by an orthodox writer as a proof text for the eternal damnation of the wicked.

As has been said, "The Church delights to steal Israel's promises, leaving them all the curses." To this it may be added that whatever in the New Testament applies to the Church and she does not like, she applies to the sinner. What absolute folly! Christ's last word out of Heaven to the Church in this dispensation is, "*Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be.*" Rev. 22:12. This means judgment on carnal believers. It is the eternal (age-lasting) judgment of Heb. 6:2. The above thoughts not only pave the way for "eternal judgment" and "eternal salvation", but they will find ample confirmation as we proceed. We are now ready to apply the principles of sound exegesis to Heb. 6:2 and 5:9.

As the truth of justification is prominent in the Epistle to the Romans, so the truth of sanctification is prominent in Hebrews. And, moreover, as justification paves the way to practical sanctification, so the latter qualifies for the Millennial Kingdom; and thus realizes the truth of Heb. 12:14.

Hebrews 12:14

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

The believer's sins were judged judicially at Calvary and judicially put away. We may assume that all sins up to the time of acceptance were forgiven and removed from the believer at that moment as far as the East is from the West. But there are sins in every believer's life after justification and the new birth. These may be treated in two ways: First, they may be repented of, forgiven, and put away, washed away through the precious blood of Christ in accordance with 1John 1:9 -

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

It is absolutely vital not to ignore the conditional promise of this verse denoted by "if." If we do not confess our sins, He will neither forgive us (in this age) nor cleanse us from all unrighteousness. These sins, if not so dealt with, will stand on record and will appear against him at the Judgment Seat of Christ, with the result that he will be excluded from the Messianic Kingdom and will suffer in proportion to the degree in which he has erred and sinned. (2Cor. 5:10; 1Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:6-8.)

The Epistle to the Hebrews not only emphasizes the importance of the doctrine of practical sanctification, but also reveals God's will for it. Christ not only died for his people, but He rose and ever liveth to make intercession for them. Christ is greater than the angels; greater than Moses; and greater than Aaron,

(Chaps. 1, 2.) But there is real danger that such riches of grace will be abused; and if so God's displeasure will surely follow as in the case of Israel. *"We are made partakers of Christ (now and in the age to come) IF (the condition follows) we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."* Heb. 3:14. *"But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, IF (the condition follows) we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."* Heb. 3:6.

Now what about hope? Study the word from Abraham to Paul, and Peter and John, and it is the hope of the Second Coming of Christ to establish the Messianic Kingdom; to raise the faithful dead; and, on the believer's part, to have a place in the first resurrection and consequently in the Kingdom of the one thousand years. Has the Christian Church as a body any such hope? Hardly. Since the third century, God's people have been victimized by a philosophical theology which has robbed them of one of the most priceless treasures of God's Word. The leaven of Matthew 13:33 has done its work well, and the whole is now leavened.

Search the accepted Creeds and Confessions of Christendom and you will find that the Church knows nothing of such a hope. And yet without this hope, and the type of character which it develops, there is nothing but exclusion for believers. "But", you say, "does not the expression, *'There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God'* (Heb. 4:9) include all believers whether sanctified or carnal? Pardon me if I shock you by saying, "No, it does not." There is a difference between the redemption of purchase and the redemption of appropriation. God can even now say of the twelve tribes of Israel, "They are My people" by purchase; but He cannot say "They are Mine" by appropriation. *"Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammî; for ye are not My people and I will not be your God. Hosea 1:9.* This is exactly the position of the majority of believers in this age as is apparent from 2Cor. 6:8-14 and Gal. 5:24. But the time shall come *"that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, ye are the sons of the living God."* Hosea 1:10. This prophecy will be fulfilled at the Second Advent of the Messiah, and with it Heb. 8:12 and 10:17.

Malachi 3:16-17

Then they that feared Jehovah (the covenant keeping God) spake often one to another; and Jehovah hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Jehovah and that thought upon His name; and they shall be mine saith Jehovah of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serveth him. (See also Matt. 5:1-14; Luke 6:48; Eph. 3:17,19; Lev. 17:23.)

Were the ten spies and those murmurers in the wilderness among the Lord's jewels? Were the Corinthians, the Galatians, and the Laodiceans? But in every age God has a few jewels like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joshua, Caleb, Samuel, David and others – and hopefully that includes you and me. It is of these that Christ says, *"Fear not little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the (Millennial) Kingdom."* This is the hope, and this is the prize (Phil. 3:7-14.) There are many portions of the word of God which belong especially to this little company and which carnal believers cannot appropriate. See Heb. 11; Rom. 8; Matthew 5-7; and the Epistle to the Ephesians.

In Hebrews chapter five, the Holy Spirit points out the fact that notwithstanding God's rich provision (4:14-16), the people addressed were falling back and were only able to take in the simplest Gospel truth - the milk of the word (Heb. 5:12-14.) In chapter 6 he exhorts them to go on to perfection, that is, Christian maturity (6:1-3.) In 6:4-8 he warns them of the consequences of falling back, that is, of falling into a state where repentance becomes subjectively impossible, and in that case exclusion is inevitable. Then in 6:9-

20 the writer expresses a hope of "better things"; and "things that accompany (Millennial) salvation"; and again speaks of God's rich provision for an overcoming Christian life. He speaks of God's promises and God's oath, and cites Abraham as an example of successful perseverance who "after he had patiently endured obtained the promise" of a firstborn son (Isaac is a type of Christ), and therein assurance of the Millennial inheritance (6:15.)

Let the reader turn up any orthodox commentary, and it will tell you that Hebrews 6:4-8 has no reference to believers, but to mere professors and legalists who know nothing of the new birth.

I will endeavor to prove that this is bad exegesis. Please note the following considerations in opposition to the traditional view:

1. The Epistle of Hebrews, as we have seen, is addressed to believers.
2. Its theme is holiness ("*hagiasmos*", 12:14) as the condition of entering the Messianic Kingdom where God is fully revealed.
3. Up to chapter 6 the sinner does not come once within the horizon of the writer, for he is writing exclusively to believers.
4. In 6:1-3, and 9-20, the exhortation is very definitely to believers, containing the most solemn warnings and encouragements, and so to the end of the Epistle.
5. Question: Is it exegetically possible that the writer could pass from the case of the unfaithful believer to that of the sinner between verses 3 and 4 and give not the slightest hint of such an abrupt transition in the unfolding of his thought? And then, again, assuming that he does, is it possible that he could jump back to the case of the believer at verse 9 without the slightest indication of any change of subject matter and without any particle of transition? Moreover, even if we grant that he is addressing sinners in verses 4-8, what relevancy would that have to the subject in hand (the sanctification of believers as a preparation for the age to come)? None whatsoever, for he is speaking of believers going on to maturity as the condition of avoiding exclusion from the Messianic Kingdom.
6. In Hebrews 6:9,10, he says:

Hebrews 6:9-10

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. 10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Thus we see the perfect continuity of the theme. The very ones who were in danger of falling away beyond possibility of renewal are the "beloved" of whom he is persuaded "better things and things that accompany (Millennial) salvation." In other words, two possibilities lay before the people addressed: on the lower side that of falling back so as to come under the sentence of eternal (age-enduring) judgment; and on the upper side that of going on like true sons of Abraham to eternal (age-lasting) salvation. Or, to state the case more forcefully, the believer of this age has the choice of spending the age to come (the thousand years) in Hadean shame and darkness, or in celestial glory and light. Perhaps you will admit that

this is a tremendously serious matter. But to make our ground firmer still, let us examine verses 4 to 8 internally:

- (1) - They had been once enlightened;
- (2) - They had tasted the heavenly gift;
- (3) - They had been partakers of the Holy Ghost;
- (4) - They had tasted the good word of God;
- (5) - They have tasted the powers of the age to come; and
- (6) - They have had a taste of the coming glory.

Now I ask you, did ever any unregenerate man have such an experience as that? Is it not perfect and blessed as far as it goes? Is it safe to say that ninety per cent of believers on the earth today cannot testify to anything better than that; and the majority of them cannot even come up to it? And yet orthodox writers would have us believe that the people addressed (in these verses) were unregenerate sinners. Nothing but the dire necessities of a false theory of interpretation handed down from the darkness of the Middle-Ages could induce any man to so pervert the word of God in the interest of carnal expediency. No doubt most commentators are sincere, and they are not to be classed with post-millenarian interpreters; but they are still unable to fully extricate themselves from the traditions of men. Indeed no man has been able to do this except in the degree that he is under the power of God's Holy Spirit; and we resist Him at some point to our own undoing.

(7) - "If they shall fall away." He does not say they *will*. If, however, they *do* fall away, to which we are all susceptible, the penalty is exclusion from the Messianic Kingdom; and this involves the believer in the age-lasting judgment of chapter 6:2.

If on the other hand they walk in the steps of Abraham, the Father of the faithful, they will through faith and patience inherit the promise (Heb. 6:15.) Can it be said of a mere professor, an unregenerate sinner, that if he keeps on in the path before him it will be well with his soul in the end? Surely not. And if so, then the writer is not talking to sinners, but to Christians. The matter is summed up for these two groups of Christians in Hebrews 10:39:

Hebrews 10:39

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Notice the two groups: them that draw back unto perdition (the unsaved cannot draw back – they were never there in the first place), and them that believe to the saving of the soul: which Peter tells us is the end-goal of our faith, and James tells us this occurs through receiving with meekness the engrafted word:

1 Peter 1:9

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

James 1:21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

And was not the peril of apostasy among the Hebrews also the peril of the Corinthians and the Galatians in Paul's day; and of the Ephesians in John's day? And is it not the peril of believers all through this

dispensation? Thus Israel is a perfect type of the Christian Church in her unbelief and disobedience and consequent failure to reach the land of promise and there abide (John 15:6.)

Some commentators cite the case of the ten spies (Deut. 1:19-26) as though they were lost sinners. On the contrary, they are a type of the great mass of born-again believers who are yet full of unbelief in reference to the truths of prophecy and the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ. And so it was with the children of Israel who fell in the wilderness. An examination of Heb. 10:26-31 leads us to the same conclusion as our study of 6:4-8. And how forcefully the Holy Spirit brings the facts home to us when Paul says:

1Corinthians 10:6

Now these were our ensamples [warnings] to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

How could they be examples to us if they do not belong to the same class and if we are not in danger of the same judgment?

Let me here state an awful, solemn fact: From such passages of Scripture as Matt. 13:1-49; 16:21-27; 24:32-51; 25:1-30; 1Cor. 10:1-10; Rom. 11:14-44; and Rev. Chapters 2 and 3; as well as from an honest study of the history of Christendom, we are obliged to conclude that very few of the saved in this dispensation will be able to share in the glory of the first resurrection and the Messianic Kingdom; rather it will be such that exclusion with its disciplinary and penal consequences is their sure inheritance.

Matthew 22:14

For many are called, but few are chosen.

Truly it is a fearful thing (for a worldly Christian) to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31; 12:29.) Personally, I confess that except as I follow Christ in the way of the Cross with its rejection of the world - especially the religious world - I have no hope of a place with Him in His Millennial Reign (Luke 9:23; 14:25-35.)

Let no man say that the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not for Gentile Christians in these respects. The children of Israel held three positions, and they are all typical:

- (1) In Egypt under the blood of the Passover Lamb - the type of Christ;
- (2) In the wilderness on their way to Canaan - type of the believer's utter dependence upon God as he journeys through this spiritually barren world; and also the natural dislike of the flesh in the believer for such a position;
- (3) And then in the land of promise. Let me put it this way: Israel in the wilderness, relative to the Promised Land, is a type of the Church in the world, relative to the coming Messianic, Millennial Kingdom. Doctrinally we have the anti-type of Israel's three positions in Rom. 6, 7, and 8.

Romans 6 gives the believer's standing and immeasurable objective riches in Christ; and also the path by which these riches are to be made subjectively real (6:3-5.) But the believer has yet to learn how to walk in this path so that Christ may cause His righteousness to grow in him.

Romans 7 represents the believer beginning to recognize his inheritance in Christ and reaching out after them only to find himself under the dominion of the self-life, because he does not understand the place and work of the Holy Spirit as the only one who can bring him through death-to-self into Canaan. He seeks to reach the goal in his own strength (though unconsciously) and fails. The flesh is stronger than the spirit.

Romans 8 gives the picture of when the believer has given up his fleshly struggle, sells his all for the pearl of great price and puts on the whole armor of God and is able to say, "*The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*" Here he stands by faith. This, spiritually, is an earnest of the land of promise.

To suppose, with Arminian Theology, that Romans 8 is the experience of one seeking salvation by works is as contrary to sound exegesis as it is to Christian experience and observation.

Thus, on grounds of exegetical necessity I have demonstrated that the adjective *aionios* in Heb. 6:2 and 5:9 cannot be rendered eternal or everlasting, but age-lasting - that is, lasting throughout the age referred to. At the end of that age the judgment will be lifted after that the carnal believer has been made right with God (this comes about through the Father's disciplinary hand during the millennium in the Outer Darkness), and he will then enter the Kingdom in its *truly* eternal state. In our study of the narrative concerning the Rich Young Ruler we were obliged, on grounds of exegetical necessity, to come to the same conclusion concerning the meaning of the word *aionios*.

I believe that I have now established a principle which I may formulate thus:

Wherever we find the adjective *aionios* associated with nouns other than those which are descriptive of God, or His attributes, we are to interpret it either as *age-lasting* or *eternal*, according to the context of the passage in which it appears. And that context should consider whether grace or works are in view, and also whether the subject is in the present possession of the believer, or whether it is a conditional hope of future fulfillment.

Let us now examine several other passages where *aionios* occurs.

(Note 7) - Sometimes, as in John 3:16, the free gift of eternal life by implication lies behind the prize and is taken for granted; but the main idea looks forward to the full realization of Israel's most glorious hope in the Millennial Kingdom.

(Note 8) - John 3:15-16 – believers are in view (whosoever believeth in Him.) As a group, believers can perish (during the Millennial age), or receive eternal (life for the age) life. According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, the "world" ("*kosmos*") as used here consists of believers only. This *kosmos* consists of "whosoever believeth in Him." It is important to note that the "should" is conditional. It does not say the believer "will", but that he "should" (might.) In John 3:36, the verse states that this individual who believes on the Son already "hath" eternal life, and in this instance eternity is in view. The Christian should not perish, but he might. The word "believeth" is "*pisteuo*", and the second definition of this Greek word is to entrust one's spiritual well-being to Christ. This is more than believing and accepting that Jesus died for our sins. It means to allow Christ to live in us. The word "believeth" is a continuous action verb. This is works. Life for the age requires works, and the Scriptures confirm this many times; but it must be remembered that "eternal life" and "going to heaven" are not the same thing. Life for the age is entrance into the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ – the Kingdom of Heaven.

As is true with most of the traditional interpretations of Scripture, the traditional understanding of the definition of eternal life is grossly in error. First, it should be made clear that a Christian is someone who has been regenerated spiritually. The Christian's spirit has been made alive by the work of the Holy Spirit. Repentance was not a requirement for this regeneration to take place, but part of it and it originates as a gracious granting of God: (Acts 11:18 *"Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."*)

It was the Holy Spirit's work, and the individual had nothing to do with it. Repentance is a work that a person can perform *after* he has been spiritually regenerated. The Holy Spirit does the work of regeneration; we have nothing to do with our second birth anymore than we had anything to do with our first birth.

When a person is spiritually regenerated, he is given the gift of faith, and he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. This simply means that the person believes that Jesus' death on the cross was the payment for that person's sin. The veracity of the truth that Jesus is Lord is His bodily resurrection. In addition, it means that this individual will most certainly at some point be in heaven, and when he is in heaven, he will be like Jesus Christ. This means that he will be a perfect individual who will be sinless, perfect and complete. This individual will be in perfect health with a perfect body, and he will be totally and completely obedient to God. He will be totally controlled by his new spirit nature, which was born of God when he was spiritually regenerated. This is the final state of all Christians, but there is more. There is much more than most Christians realize.

(Note 9) - 1 Tim. 1:16: *"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them (Christians) who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."* It is evident that Paul is not here referring to the gift of "eternal life" but to the prize; and he indicates that it can only be won by living the kind of a life he lived. This agrees with Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24; Rom. 2:7.

(Note 10) – 1Tim 6:12 - Paul says to Timothy; *"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."* Timothy had been converted many years before this, *and was therefore already in possession of the free gift of eternal life*. Paul could not exhort him to contend for something he already possessed. On the other hand, eternal life in this passage cannot refer to the eternal state beyond the Millennium, for the reason that absolutely all believers are assured of that. The problem is, shall we spend the one thousand years with Christ in glory, or in the darkness of the Hadean world?

(Note 11) - 2Peter 1:5-11 - Peter urges believers thus:

2Peter 1:5-11

And beside this, giving all diligence add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge self-control; and to self-control patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall be neither barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he [the believer] that lacketh these things [and most Christians do lack them] is blind, and cannot see afar off [to the Messianic Kingdom], and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins [sins committed before conversion]. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election [to a place

in the Messianic Kingdom] *sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall* [implying that if they do not do them they will fall]; *for so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting [age-lasting] Kingdom of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.*

It is my earnest hope that every honest reader now sees clearly the distinction between the free gift and the prize; and also the different methods by which each is secured - the one by faith without works, and the other by faith expressed through works. Let us listen to our Savior's talk with the woman at the well:

(Note 12) - John 4:14 - *But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never [not for the age] thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* Let us now translate the fourteenth verse correctly:

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall not thirst for, or in, the age [to come]; but the water that I shall give him shall become [not "eimi" but "ginomai"] in him a fountain of water springing up into age-lasting life [in the Messianic Kingdom].

The great majority of believers know nothing of the ever-flowing fountain within coming into expression in thought, word, and act because of the presence and effective operation of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the crucified but now glorified Christ. They know an inner fountain, but one of an altogether different kind (Matt. 15:18-20; Gal. 5:19-21.) We all know this only too well. God alone can displace it with the fountain of life ("zoe".)

Consider what the Holy Spirit says of the Great Multitude standing before the Throne of God:

Revelation 7:16-17

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Thus shall come to pass the ultimate fulfillment of that which Jesus prophesied:

Matthew 5:6

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

It is very important for the reader to see the final state of all Christians. The following Scripture is certainly true:

Phil 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

All of these things that represent the final state of the Christian are wonderful, but they are not part of the Biblical promise of eternal (age-lasting) life. *This* eternal life pertains to the soul of man, and not to his spirit. This eternal life also pertains to the Christian's behavior, and the rewards for that behavior. It does not mean going to heaven, and it does not mean having a conscious existence forever. Every person, saved and unsaved, will have a conscious existence forever – either in heaven or hell.

The opposite meaning of eternal (for the age) life in the Scriptures is to perish. Since this eternal life

pertains to the soul and not the spirit, to perish also has reference to the soul of man and not the spirit. It should be remembered that the soul *is* the life of a person. It is his will, character, personality, intellect, and emotions. It is who the person is as an individual. Since eternal life and perishing pertain to the soul, it should not be difficult to understand that all Christians will either have eternal life at the Judgment Seat of Christ or they will perish. The truth is that many Christians will perish at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

(Note 13) - The following expressions refer to the same period, "eternal judgment" (Heb. 6:2); "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Peter 1:11.) In all the above cases *aionios* should be translated "age-lasting."

I will enlarge briefly on a few of the like passages.

(Note 14) - 1 Tim. 1:16: *"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them (Christians) who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."* It is evident that Paul is not here referring to the gift of "eternal life" but to the prize; and he indicates that it can only be won by living the kind of a life he lived. This agrees with Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24; Rom. 2:7.

On another occasion Christ made use of the following expression:

John 8:51

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

Let us translate this verse correctly:

John 8:51

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying he shall "not for the age" see death [for, or in, the age to come]. This is an extremely important omission from most translations.

Now this cannot mean physical death, for it is appointed unto men once to die, from which even the Apostles were not exempt. The meaning then is that those who really hear and keep the word of Christ in their hearts will be in a state of real life and fellowship with God in glorified bodies during the Millennial period; but those who do not hear and obey the word will continue in a state of death and partial alienation from God, and consequent exclusion from His presence during the same period.

(Note 15) – I wish now to call the reader's attention, in the light of the above facts, to a new interpretation of a particular portion of scripture, and request that he put more than usual energy into his powers of volition and discernment. It is this:

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

And to you who are troubled [there were many believers in that day who were not troubled, as now, because they avoided the offence of the cross John 12:42-43; 9:22; 16:2; Gal. 5:37; Matt. 10:37-39; 1 Tim. 6:13], rest with us [who are kept by the power of God through faith. 1Peter 1:3-5] when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting [age-lasting] destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be

glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe, because our testimony was believed among you, in that day.

The universal interpretation of this passage, as to the judgment foretold, has applied it to sinners and to them only. But, astonishing as it may appear at first sight, I am convinced that its primary reference is to carnal believers *also*. It was one of the fatal errors of the Jews to imagine that because they were the children of Abraham they could never by any possibility become the objects of God's displeasure; or that their beautiful City and magnificent Temple could ever be desecrated by Gentile supremacy. In this also they are a type of the Christian Church. Such is the power and folly of devotion to the traditions of men. Surely it is time that we were getting away from the shackles of Latin Theology; and especially, from its Pagan Eschatology.

Let us look for a moment at 2 Thess. 1:7-10. Note the following points:

- (1) - Very few Christians have suffered for the Kingdom's sake;
- (2) - Only a very small proportion of them believe in the pre-millennial coming;
- (3) - Very few of them know God according to Scripture.

1 John 2:3-6

And hereby we do know that we know him, IF we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

- (4) - Very few of them obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this they are like Israel. (I Sam. 15:22; Jer. 7:23; 2 Thess. 3:14; Heb. 5:9);
- (5) - There is something *more* serious than *age*-lasting destruction for unbelievers;
- (6) - "His saints" in verse 10 does not here include all believers, but those that have really lived holy lives. Heb. 12:14 in contrast with 1Cor. 3:1-15 and Gal. 5:19-21;
- (7) - "To be admired in all them that believe." Here again not all believers are included, but only those who believe the full gospel, and by the grace of God live it out in their lives. This interpretation agrees perfectly with Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24; 1Cor. 10:1-10; Rom. 11:14-24; Gal. 6:7-8; Rom. 2:1-11; and Rev. 3:14-20.
- (8) – The unsaved will be judged *permanently* at the Great White Throne Judgment, not at Christ's second coming. Therefore, the judgment in view in this passage is age-lasting.

Paul affirms that *"the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness."* One has only to examine the history of Christianity ever so superficially to see the prevalence of these sins in the Church ever since the days of the Apostles. I feel free to say with absolute assurance that I am speaking the truth, that he who accepts the amillenarian interpretation of the Scriptures is holding the truth in unrighteousness.

In 2 Thess. 1:9 we have the expression "everlasting destruction." Now it is certain that no man who has in him God's free gift of eternal life can ever suffer "eternal destruction" from the presence of the Lord; but he *may* suffer *age-lasting* destruction. This is clear from Matt. 10:37-39 and John 8:51. God's ancient people, the Jews, with few exceptions, are even now undergoing this kind of destruction. It has been assumed that neither "olethros" nor "apoleia" (both translated destruction) are ever applied to the believer in the scriptures; but this is a wholly gratuitous assumption which is in perfect keeping with many other unscriptural factors in traditional eschatology. I will not enlarge on this point at the present time, except to say that it is a sobering thought to think that of the six hundred thousand men who came out of Egypt under the power of the blood of the Passover Lamb, only two - Joshua and Caleb - entered the land of promise. It is also significant that not one of the tribe of Levi, whose work it was to minister to God in the Holy things of the Tabernacle, had faith enough, and loyalty to Jehovah enough, to enter the land promised to Abraham their father. All the others, even Moses, died in the wilderness. Such food for meditation and serious reflection there is in this solemn fact!

We should remember that the sin of Moses was not like that of the people. He was not guilty of murmuring. Yet in the face of these most solemn warnings orthodox teachers tell us that the believer is, at the moment of his death, made perfect in glory, and this in spite of the fact that the Holy Spirit through Paul says:

Hebrews 2:1-3

For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense or reward; how shall we escape [judgment] if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.(see also 5:9; 1:14; Matt. 24:13.)

There are, as already remarked, two great motives to holy living. They are love and fear, and in the nature of things they are complimentary: for the reason that God is both to be loved and feared. He is to be loved for who He is, and what He does for His creatures both in creation and redemption; and He is to be feared because of His holiness, His hatred of sin, and the certainty that He will punish it. In the very nature of things the man who loves God most will fear Him most. The Scriptures say, "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them [and them only] His covenant.*" (Psa. 25:14.) Yes, even of the Lord of glory it is said, "*He was heard in that He feared*" (Heb. 5:7.) How blessed it would have been for the children of Israel if at Kadesh-Barnea they had feared the unbelief and disobedience of their own hearts rather than the giants and walled cities of Canaan. Compare Numbers 13 and 14 with Hebrews 3 and 4.

Before closing this chapter, let me turn our attention briefly to a few of the orthodox strongholds of this plausible but delusive theory which I have been seeking to bring into the limelight of God's infallible truth - namely, that there is no judgment for believers. The first of these strongholds which we will examine is Romans 8:1:

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Let us take the verse just as it reads in the KJV. Examining the passage on purely grammatical grounds we see that it is composed of one independent and three dependent propositions. Thus:

There is no condemnation (to certain persons) - Independent.

There are three dependent propositions all of which qualify and limit the pronoun "them":

- (1) Who are in Christ Jesus (this excludes all unsaved sinners.)
- (2) Who walk not after the flesh (this excludes all believers who walk after the flesh.) There are few who do not.
- (3) But who walk after the Spirit (this limits the "no condemnation" to the very small number who walk in the Spirit. Thus Paul and the Master are in perfect accord.)

The plain implication is that for believers who walk after the flesh there will be condemnation; and in Galatians 5:19-21 Paul positively affirms this.

But someone will reply, "The R.V. omits the last two dependent propositions, and reads, '*There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*', and with this correction our fortress still stands, and stands firmly."

Then how are we to reconcile Rom. 8:1 and such passages as Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 1:17-18; and scores of others scriptures? I lay it down as an axiomatic principle that the word of God is one and harmonious in all its parts. Therefore the first thing to do is to open our Greek testament and see if the translation of Rom. 8:1 is correct. And this is what we read: "There is, therefore, now no DAMNATION to them that are in Christ Jesus." Thus viewed there is perfect harmony between Rom. 8:1 and the other passages cited.

But I maintain that the verse stands as it is in the A.V. The phrase "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" is certainly present in verse 4 in the other versions. Why do the contenders not contest the same phrase in verse 4? And it is certainly found in the Textus Receptus, from which the A.V. was translated.

I am not a rabid believer of the "King James Only" doctrine. I believe the Word of God exists today wherever there is a faithful translation of what was originally written. However, I believe the King James Version holds the highest authority in matters of disputed verses.

(Note 16) "But what about John 5:24? Does not this verse say that this believer will not come into condemnation just as does Romans 8:1?"

John 5:24

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

To this I would answer: John 5:24 refers to initial salvation – that of being born-again. This is so because the "everlasting life" in view is presently in his possession ("hath.") Here he has passed from death to life, and is now presently in the Kingdom of His dear Son.

Colossians 1:13

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

This Kingdom of His dear Son is the present Kingdom of Heaven here on earth, of which all believers are partakers. The coming Kingdom of Heaven is entered through works, and can be lost for the age. And most believers will not enter that kingdom (*For many are called, but few chosen. Mat 20:16; 22:14.*)

(Note 17) – 1John 2:25 – *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* The promise is to Christians (us.) You don't promise an item to someone who already has that item (us). A promise is for something to be fulfilled in the future. Therefore, this promise must be still to come at a future time. The eternal life we *already* have in our possession is life-for-all-eternity (1John 5:13) and is unconditional. It follows then, that the promise of future fulfillment has to be life for the age – age-lasting life – which is conditioned upon obedience and pertains to Salvation of the Soul.

(Note 18) – 1 John 3:15 - *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* At first glance, this verse seems to be a contradiction; but as in all such cases, it deserves careful and prayerful consideration to fully understand it. The contradiction is that we know from practical experience that it is certainly possible for a born-again Christian to hate his brother. And yet we know that the verse is directed to Christians and concerns only them (primarily.) The problem comes from our failure to understand that it is possible that a Christian, although saved for all the eternal ages, may not have the Father and the Son abiding in him. Such abiding by the Father and the Son is conditioned upon obedience. Let us carefully examine the following passage from John:

John 15:1-12

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples 9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. 11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. 12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Our failure to understand stems mainly from the incorrectly taught interpretation of verses 2 and 6. In verse 2, the Lord speaks of two branches – one that bears fruit, and one that does not bear fruit. But the fact remains that both these branches were originally *in Him* (in Me.) No unbeliever is ever in Him; the passage is addressed to Christians and Christians only. So then it follows that the Christian in verse 6 who does not abide in Him is cast out, and they are gathered, and burned. This happens at the Judgment Seat of Christ, where those whom Christ judges to be unworthy of entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven are cast out into the Outer Darkness.

Matthew 25:30

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This doctrine is explored in detail in the later chapter on the Olivet Discourse. But suffice it to say at this point that of the three judged in this Parable of the Talents, *all were servants*. Nowhere in Scripture is an unsaved person ever described as a servant in this context. This is a Christian who was cast into the Outer Darkness. And it is the Christian who does not abide in Him that is cast out ("*cast forth as a branch*" – vs. 6.)

The requirement for abiding in Him (in Christ) is obedience to his word. First of all, in verse 4 we are *commanded* to "*abide in Me.*" This is a command that we are to do, and it is obvious that we have the choice whether or not to do so. And how do we "abide in Him"? This is accomplished by obeying His command to "*continue [abide] ye in my love*" (vs. 9.) We abide in His love by obeying His commandments (vs. 10.) In fact, Jesus further elaborates in the same verse that He, Himself kept the Father's commandments, and thereby abode in His Father's love. And what is the sum total of His commandments? To love one another (vs. 12), thereby fulfilling the Royal Law (James 2:8, Rom 13:8, Gal 5:14.)

So then, it is possible for a Christian not to have the Father and the Son abiding in him. And in our verse under consideration, this is manifest by the fact that he does *not* love his brother, and therefore, does not have the Son abiding in him – for the eternal life in question abides in the Son (1John 5:11.)

In conclusion, I would repeat that wherever we find the adjective *aionios* associated with nouns other than those which are descriptive of God, or His attributes, we are to interpret it either as age-lasting, or eternal, according to the context of the passage in which it appears. And that context should consider whether grace or works are in view, and also whether the subject is in the present possession of the believer, or whether it is a conditional hope of future fulfillment. Of course, this has not been an exhaustive review of every verse in question, but I'll leave this up to the reader to pursue using the foregoing stipulations.

Matthew 18:8 8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.	Works (talking to saved; entrance to the millennial kingdom in view)	Age-lasting
Matthew 19:16 16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?	Works (Note 1 - Christ told him to <u>do</u> something)	Age-lasting
Matthew 19:29 29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.	Works (on the part of believers; inheritance is a reward –Col 3:24)	Age-lasting

Matthew 25:41 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:	Works (how they treated the Jews during the Tribulation)	Age-lasting
Matthew 25:46 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.	Works (same as above)	Age-lasting
Mark 3:29 29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never [not for the age] forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal [for the age] damnation:	Works (a possible work of the believer)	Age-lasting
Mark 10:17 17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?	Works	Age-lasting
Mark 10:30 30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.	Works	Age-lasting
Luke 10:25 25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?	Works	Age-lasting
Luke 16:9 9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.	Works (we make friends)	Age-lasting
Luke 18:18 18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?	Works	Age-lasting
Luke 18:30 30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.	Works	Age-lasting
John 3:15 15 That whosoever believeth [this group] in him should not perish, but have eternal life.	Works (comparing believers; see Notes 2, 8)	Age-lasting (primarily, with eternity also in view)
John 3:16 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.	Both (see notes 5, 7, 8)	Primarily Age-lasting
John 3:36 36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.	Grace (already "hath"; note 2) Comparing believers and unbelievers.	Eternal
John 4:14		

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.	See note 12	Age-lasting
John 4:36 36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.	Works (sowing and reaping)	Age-lasting
John 5:24 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.	Grace (only belief is in view; "hath" is his present possession; note 16)	Eternal
John 5:39 39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.	Grace (believing is in view in the passage)	Eternal
John 6:27 27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.	Works (laboring is in view)	Age-lasting
John 6:40 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.	Grace (belief)	Eternal
John 6:47 47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.	Grace (belief; present possession)	Eternal
John 6:54 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.	Grace (<i>"hath"</i> is a present possession)	Eternal
John 6:68 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.	Works (Peter was already born-again)	Age-lasting
John 10:28 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.	Grace (gift)	Eternal
John 12:25 25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.	Works	Age-lasting
John 12:50 50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.	Deity	Eternal
John 17:2 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.	Grace (gift)	Eternal
John 17:3 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.	Grace (see vs. 17:2)	Eternal
Acts 13:46		

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.	Grace (speaking to unsaved Jews)	Eternal
Acts 13:48 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.	Grace (belief)	Eternal
Romans 2:7 7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:	Works (well doing)	Age-lasting
Romans 5:21 21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.	Works (see notes 3, 4)	Age-lasting
Romans 6:22 22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.	Works (already saved; the end goal is fruit, which comes from work)	Age-lasting
Romans 6:23 23 For the wages of sin is death; but* the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Better translated "nevertheless"	(See notes 2, 4)	Eternal
Romans 16:25 25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world [ages] began,	Ages	Ages
Romans 16:26 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:	Deity	Eternal
2 Corinthians 4:17 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;	Works (speaking to saved about sanctification)	Age-lasting
2 Corinthians 4:18 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.		Eternal
2 Corinthians 5:1 5 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.	Deity (made by God)	Eternal
Galatians 6:8 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.	Works (we do the sowing)	Age-lasting
Philippians 4:20		

20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.	Deity	Eternal
2 Thessalonians 1:9 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;	Not time of Great White Throne; will be eternal then. See note 15.)	Age-lasting
2 Thessalonians 2:16 16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,	Grace (gift; already in our possession)	Eternal
1 Timothy 1:16 16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.	Works (Note 9, 14)	Age-lasting
1 Timothy 6:12 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.	Works (we lay hold; speaking to saved; note 10, 15)	Age-lasting
1 Timothy 6:16 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.	Deity	Eternal
2 Timothy 1:9 9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world [ages] began,	Ages	Ages
2 Timothy 2:10 10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.	Works (may obtain)	Age-lasting
Titus 1:2 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world [age] began;	Hope (Paul had not yet received it)	Age-lasting
Titus 3:7 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.	Hope (we are already justified)	Age-lasting
Phm 15 15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;	Works (Philemon does the receiving)	Could be both – eternal implied
Hebrews 5:9 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;	Works (they that <u>obey</u> Him)	Age-lasting
Hebrews 6:2 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.	Works (note 6, 13)	Age-lasting
Hebrews 9:12	Grace (Christ did it all; it	Eternal

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.	has been obtained already)	
Hebrews 9:14 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?	Deity	Eternal
Hebrews 9:15 15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.	Works (<u>might</u> receive; inheritance is conditional)	Age-lasting
Hebrews 13:20 20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,	Grace (blood)	Eternal
1 Peter 5:10 10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.	Works (many are called, but few chosen; we have been called, but not yet received this glory)	Eternal
2 Peter 1:11 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.	Works (vs. 5 "labor diligently"; notes 11, 13)	Age-lasting
1 John 1:2 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)	Deity (speaking of Jesus)	Eternal
1 John 2:25 25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.	Note 17	Age-lasting
1 John 3:15 15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.	Note 18	Age-lasting
1 John 5:11 11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.	Grace (gift); Deity	Eternal
1 John 5:13 13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.	Grace (belief and present possession)	Eternal
1 John 5:20 20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.	Deity	Eternal
Jud 7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange	Great White Throne is still future; it will	Age-lasting

flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.	later be eternal.	
Jud 1 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.	Speaking to saved; we do the keeping by obedience	Age-lasting
Revelation 1:18 18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.	Deity	Eternal
Revelation 14:6 6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,	Speaking to unsaved; the Church is gone at this point.	Eternal

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

This is the beginning of a series of discussions on the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. It is my intention to examine at this point seven parables that are taught by our Lord Jesus Christ concerning the coming Kingdom of Heaven. These parables are:

Parables spoken "that same day" by the seaside

- (1) The Parable of the Sower
- (2) The Parable of the Tares
- (3) The Parable of the Mustard Seed
- (4) The Parable of the Leaven

Parables spoken "that same day" in the house

- (5) The Parable of the Treasure Hid in a Field
- (6) The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price
- (7) The Parable of the Net

This chapter is fundamental and vitally important for an understanding of eschatology because in it is portrayed the chronological development of the Kingdom of Heaven from the time of our Lord's first advent until His return. The Lord Himself gives the interpretation of the parable of the sower and the parable of the tares; this sheds further light on interpreting the remaining five.

The first verse says, "*The same day, went Jesus out of the house and sat by the seaside.*" The expression "same day" refers to a particular day, and in the light of the context, that particular day is the one in which the events of chapter twelve took place. The significant thing about the "same day" is that on that day Israel had turned her back upon the Lord, and He then turned His back upon Israel. In the closing verses of this chapter He announced a new relationship which was conditioned upon obedience rather than lineal descent.

Matthew 12:50

For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Why did He speak to them in parables?

Matthew 13:10

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

The English word "parable" is simply an Anglicized form of the Greek word *parabole*, a compound word which means "to cast alongside." A parable, by its own definition, is a truth placed alongside of something previously existing, which could only be a previously revealed truth. And the additional truth would be given to help explain the previously revealed truth.

Matthew 13:12-14

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

This is why these parables could be understood by the disciples but would be meaningless to numerous others in the nation (vs. 10-17). The matter hinged on whether or not the previously revealed truths had been received [whosoever hath]. The disciples had received the previously revealed truths, and were born again spiritually. Therefore, they would understand the parables, for the parables dealt with that which they had previously received. But those rejecting Christ and His message had not received the previously revealed truths, and were yet not born again. Therefore, they would not be able to understand the parables, for the parables dealt with that which they had previously rejected.

In order to understand the Kingdom of Heaven, one must be born again. Jesus taught that in John:

John 3:3

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see [perceive, understand] the kingdom of God.

Matthew 13:14

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

The Greek word for "see" in John 3:3 is the same Greek word used above in Matthew 13:14.

Mark 4:11-12

And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them [for if they did, they would turn to God, and their sins would be forgiven, and they would be born again].

Some have thought the words in verse 12 to be a statement of some divine intent to make people misunderstand. But instead, a closer look shows it is a quotation of Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 6:9-10) that Jesus was applying to His ministry as well. He was essentially acknowledging what we have already. The crowds were eager for excitement but not for changes. *These see the truth, but they won't let it penetrate their vision; they hear, but they won't grant an understanding response.* Jesus quotes the prophet in explaining why people don't really listen. He said it was "Lest they should turn"; that is, turn to God's ways and be changed through the transforming power of "their sins being forgiven them". He was noting how much human nature does not want to submit to change. We prefer not being "untangled" (forgiven) from sins we would rather embrace (John 3:19).

The Definition of the Kingdom of Heaven

First of all, please note that in this chapter the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God are one and the same; i.e., the term is used interchangeably here. This same thought can also be seen in Matt. 19:23-24. (This is not always the case throughout the New Testament, but it applies in this instance.)

Matthew 19:23-24

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

So then, what does this term mean as used in here in Matthew 13 - the Kingdom of Heaven (a.k.a. the Kingdom of God)?

The Kingdom of God is:

- (1) The sphere of God's rule over all.

Psalms 22:28

For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations.

Daniel 4:25

That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

Psalms 145:13

Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

- (2) Since, however, this earth is the scene of universal rebellion against God, the Kingdom of God is presently the sphere in which, at any given time, His rule is acknowledged. God has not relinquished His sovereignty in the face of rebellion, both demoniac and human, but has declared His purpose to establish it.

Daniel 2:44

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

In the meantime, seeking willing obedience, He gave His law to a nation (Israel) and appointed kings to administer His Kingdom over it.

1 Chronicles 28:5

And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.

Israel, however, though still declaring a nominal allegiance to the Kingdom, shared in the common rebellion, and after they had rejected the Son of God, they were "cast away" and the Kingdom was taken away from them.

Matthew 21:43

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Thus, now the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to a new nation, the one new man in Christ; i.e., the Body of Christ. This new creation has the capacity and privilege of submitting voluntarily to His rule through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. This Kingdom of Heaven at present is said to be "in mystery" (Mark 4:11). That is, it does not come within the range of the natural powers of observation (Luke 17:20), but is spiritually discerned. When at the time of Jesus' Second Coming God asserts His rule universally, this kingdom will be manifest to all.

Luke 17:20

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

Thus, speaking generally, references to the Kingdom fall into two classes: the first, in which it is viewed as present and involving suffering for those who enter it (Matt. 11:12); the second, in which it is viewed as future and is associated with reward (Matt. 25:34). Entrance into the present Kingdom is by the new birth; entrance into the future Kingdom is by reward.

The fundamental principle of the Kingdom is declared in the words of the Lord spoken in the midst of a company of Pharisees:

Luke 17:21

Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you [in your midst].

That is to say, where the King is, there is the Kingdom. Thus at the present time and so far as this earth is concerned, where the King is and where His rule is acknowledged, is, first, in the heart of the individual believer; and second, in the Church of God, the Body of Christ.

It is in this second sense, the Church, the Body of Christ on earth, that the Kingdom of Heaven is used in Matthew 13 presently under discussion.

The Kingdom of Heaven Was Originally Intended for the Nation of Israel

When God called Israel out of Egypt under Moses, one central purpose was in view. The nation, God's firstborn son (Exo. 4:22, 23), had been called out of Egypt to enter another land - a land previously covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - and exercise the rights of the firstborn in that land (Exo. 19:5-6). And everything which has occurred within Israeli history down through the years, from Moses' day until the present day, has had its roots within *Israel's calling as God's firstborn and that which Israel has done relative to this calling.*

A theocracy, with God's firstborn son realizing the rights of primogeniture within that theocracy, was in the offering during Moses' day. But, because of unbelief, the people refused to enter the land at Kadesh-Barnea and conquer the inhabitants, as God had commanded. And, as a result, the Israelites entering the land and realizing a theocracy within the land was delayed until that entire unbelieving and responsible generation (those twenty years old and above [Num. 14:29]) had passed off the scene. And also, because Moses subsequently struck the rock in Num. 20:8-11, in direct disobedience to God's command, he was numbered with that generation as well and was not allowed to lead the Israelites into the land. The Lord, instead, appointed Joshua for this task (Num. 20:12; 27:12-14; Deut. 34:1-12).

Thus, once all those having a part in the unbelief exhibited at Kadesh-Barnea had died (including Moses), Joshua was allowed to lead the nation into the land. And the theocracy which first existed in the land under Joshua's leadership, lasted for about eight hundred years, until the time of the Babylonian captivity, when the Glory departed. *However, this theocracy never reached the heights which God intended for Israel (because of disobedience on Israel's part.)*

Then, when Christ came about six hundred years following the Babylonian captivity and the end of the theocracy, a remnant had returned to the land (a restoration which had begun under Zerubbabel over five centuries earlier). And though a remnant was in the land at this time, forming an Israeli nation, the "Times of the Gentiles" (when the Gentiles are in control of world affairs, government, etc.) was running its course. Rome was the world power, and Rome not only possessed governmental control over the remnant in the land but also over the Jewish people scattered throughout the Roman world of that day.

Israel had been called into existence to exercise governmental power over the Gentile nations, for purposes involving God's blessings (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:17, 18; Exo. 19:5, 6). Israel was to dwell in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, within a theocracy, at the head of the nations; and God was not only to bless Israel but God was to bless the nations of the earth *through* Israel. All spiritual blessings were to flow *to and through Israel* in this manner.

But events transpired which resulted in a complete reversal of the position Israel had been called to occupy relative to the nations. The Gentiles had been allowed to invade the land of Israel and take the Jewish people captive (the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and the Babylonians in 605 B.C. [beginning the Times of the Gentiles]). And centuries later, when Christ was upon earth, the Gentiles still exercised control over world affairs.

And not only was Israel under Gentile dominion when Christ came the first time, but the nation, in its unbelief and disobedience, wanted nothing to do with the One announced by the wise men to be Israel's King; nor did they want anything to do with the offer of the restoration of the Kingdom of Heaven – a theocracy with God as their King, over a nation which would then be a blessing to all the nations of the world.

The Jewish people went so far in their rejection of the offer as to crucify the One making the offer. The religious leaders, even though they knew Christ's identity - One Who had come from God, *the Heir* of the vineyard - were not going to have this Man reign over them (Matt. 21:38; John 3:2).

The entire nation, save "*a remnant according to the election of grace*" (Rom. 11:5), followed the downward course set by its religious leaders; and this resulted in God setting the nation aside for a dispensation. Jerusalem was then destroyed by the Gentile world power of that day (by Rome, in 70 A.D.), and the Jewish people were scattered among and left at the mercy of the Gentiles.

But, even though the nation was set aside, allowing God to deal with a separate people for a dispensation (those forming *the one new man* "in Christ"), the principles established by God relative to Israel and the nation's calling still remained in effect. And these principles centered around blessings and curses, not only for Israel but for the Gentiles as well. Israel, because of disobedience, would fall into the latter category (curses); and the Gentiles, depending upon their attitude toward and treatment of Israel, could fall into either category (blessings or curses).

(God, through Moses, had outlined this entire matter in graphic and minute detail to Israel after He called the nation out of Egypt. There are two long chapters in the revelation given through Moses - Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 - where God went to great lengths to relate that which would occur if the Jewish people were obedient to His commandments and, on the other hand, that which would occur if they were disobedient.) Israel had chosen the latter path. Israel had been disobedient to the Lord's commandments. And, true to His Word, God had allowed Gentile powers to come into the land and uproot the Jewish people (Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:64).

And throughout the ensuing dispensation, during the time when Israel was out of favor with God, one thing could not occur - the Gentile nations could not be blessed in the manner which God had intended through Israel's calling, for these blessings had to flow *through Israel dwelling in the land within a theocracy*. Blessings of this nature would have to await a time when Israel was once again in favor with God. They would have to await Israel's future restoration, which would, of necessity, have to include the restoration of the theocracy to Israel. This will ultimately occur when Christ returns to establish His kingdom, and once again restores Israel as the head of the nations.

That the disciples were expecting this restoration even prior to His ascension we see in Acts:

Acts 1:6-7

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

Paul Taught Two Aspects of the Kingdom

Paul taught the same two aspects of the kingdom that the Lord Jesus taught. The first is the present spiritual form of the kingdom in the hearts of all those who acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as Saviour, but as Master, Lord and King of their lives, here and now. The second is the future, literal kingdom to be manifested when the Lord Jesus comes back to this earth in glory to reign for a thousand years of peace and righteousness.

The Present Spiritual Aspect of the Kingdom

The first aspect of the kingdom was described by the Lord Jesus in a literal translation of Luke 17:20, 21:

Luke 17:20-21

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [in such a manner that it cannot be watched with the eyes] : 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within [in the midst of] you.

The Pharisees did not have the spiritual perception to realize that, in a spiritual sense, the kingdom of God was already "in their midst", in the person of this lowly Galilean rabbi, whom they did not recognize as the coming King of kings and Lord of lords. This was why the Lord Jesus startled the great Pharisee, Nicodemus, "a ruler of the Jews", by telling him, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3). He made it very clear that the spiritual form of His kingdom cannot even be *perceived*, much less entered into, except by those who have experienced the spiritual miracle of the "new birth."

Paul also mentions the spiritual form of the kingdom. To the Romans he wrote, *"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"* (Rom. 14:17). To the Corinthians, *"For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power"* (1Cor. 4:20). To the Colossians, *"Giving thanks to the Father... who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son"* (Col. 1:13).

Neither the Lord Jesus Christ nor Paul taught that the *church* is the kingdom. But they both make it clear that as soon as a man becomes a member of the family of God through the new birth, he is "delivered from the power of darkness" and translated into the spiritual kingdom of God. So, today, the spiritual aspect of "the Kingdom of Christ and of God" is now present on earth in the person of "the King of kings" Who indwells the bodies of millions of His followers, in the person of "the Spirit of Christ."

The Future Literal Aspect of the Kingdom

A continued study of Paul's uses of the word "kingdom" in his epistles shows that he agreed with His Lord in teaching a future literal aspect of the kingdom. The Lord Jesus, in Luke 17, set forth the spiritual aspect of the kingdom which "does not come in such a manner that it can be watched with the eyes." In Luke 19, He faced the fact that the Jewish people were expecting a literal, visible kingdom, in which He would be the King, defeat all of their enemies, deliver them from the power of Rome, and make them rulers with Him over the whole earth:

Luke 19:11-15

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

In this parable, the Lord Jesus pictured Himself as the nobleman going away "to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return" as King. He also pictured the rewards which His faithful servants, who did business for Him during His absence, would receive. One was to reign with Him over "ten cities", another over "five cities", and the "wicked servant" over no cities. The Lord Jesus knew that He would be coming back to this earth to reign and said so in no uncertain terms. Consider His words just a few days before His death on the cross:

Matthew 24:30

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Matthew 25:31

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

Luke 22:29-30

And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Matthew 13:41

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

The only real hope for this sin-cursed, war-torn world is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. When He comes in power and great glory, He will solve all the physical, social, moral and spiritual problems created by man's sin and rebellion. In the physical realm, He will deliver the earth itself from the curse of sin into *"the glorious liberty of the children of God"* (Rom. 8:19-21). *"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree"* (Isa. 55:13). All the enmity will be taken out of the animal kingdom so that the lion will lie down with the lamb and the leopard, the bear, and the wolf will all lose their ferocity. The little child will have carnivorous animals for his pets and babies will be able to play with poisonous reptiles (Isa. 11:6-8).

The social revolution which has been the dream of sages throughout history will be a glorious reality when "The Prince of Peace" sits upon His throne and reigns and rules humanity with a rod of iron. *"And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"* (Isa. 2:4). *All the sick and the crippled will be healed by The Great Physician* (Isa. 35:3-6). *They shall "obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."*

The moral and spiritual problems of humanity will be solved because *"every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."* It will be the age, not of grace, but of absolute justice, when every major sin of rebellion will be judged on the spot. The form of government will be neither monarchy, democracy, socialism, nor communism, but *theocracy*, with a perfect dictator, the Lord of lords and King of kings, ruling over the whole earth for a thousand years. *"Every man shall sit under his own vine and his fig tree and none shall make them afraid"* (Micah 4:4). *"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"* (Isa. 11:9).

This reign of the Lord Jesus Christ is called "The Millennium", a term derived from the Latin words for "thousand years." Every attempt has been made by the opponents of pre-millennial doctrine to explain away the explicit statements in Revelation 20:1-7. For, in this passage, no less than six times in seven verses, the Holy Spirit inspired John to give the duration of the Lord Jesus' reign upon earth as one thousand years. One clear statement in the inspired Word should be enough to establish a truth. When the

Spirit of God repeats a truth six times in seven verses, it should be enough to convince all except those who are blind *because they will not believe*. John wrote, *"I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years"* (Rev. 20:4).

This, then, is the future, literal manifestation of "the Kingdom of God" on earth, in which the Apostle Paul was assured that he would reign with his Lord. This is the goal which he, by precept and example, holds before all Christians as the proper goal of their lives - suffering with Christ that they may also reign with Him; attaining the out-resurrection from among the dead and winning the prize of the up-calling!

Let us then resume our discussion of the Mysteries of the Kingdom; again, it is the Kingdom of Heaven in the spiritual sense that is in view throughout the thirteenth chapter of Matthew.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

(Matt. 13:3-9; 18-23) (Mark 4:3-8; 14-20) (Luke 8:5-8; 11-15)

Matthew 13:3-9

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Matthew 13:18-23

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the Word of the Kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

The parable of the Sower, the first of four parables which Christ gave outside the house, by the seaside, is comprised of four parts. Each part has to do with exactly the same thing: fruit-bearing, with the kingdom of the heavens in view - a kingdom being offered (during the time [an age] covered by this parable) to a people other than Israel (to the new creation "in Christ").

Israel - the nation to whom the kingdom of the heavens was being offered at the time Christ gave the parable of the Sower is represented in Matthew's gospel as a barren fig tree (Matt. 21:18, 19; Joel 1:7). The tree had leaves, but no fruit. And Christ, because of the fruitless condition of the tree (representing the fruitless condition of Israel), pronounced a curse on the tree. He said, *"Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever* [lit. 'for an age'].*"* And the fig tree, by the next day, had *"withered away"*, showing what was about to happen to Israel (vs. 19-20; Mark 11:13-14, 20-21).

At the conclusion of the parable of the householder and the vineyard, the chief priests and elders themselves prophesied what was to become of Israel when they finally rejected and slew their Messiah:

Matthew 21:41

They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Jesus confirmed this in verse 43:

Matthew 21:43

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

The parable of the Sower looks out ahead to God's activity during an entirely separate dispensation, following the removal of the kingdom from Israel and a new nation being brought forth to bear fruit (Matt. 21:33-43). Israel, because of the nation's barren condition, was to be set aside for a dispensation (an *age*); and, throughout the dispensation, God would deal with a different nation with respect to fruit-bearing and the kingdom of heaven.

This is the "*holy nation*", a "*peculiar people*" to which Peter referred, who "*in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy*" (1 Peter 2:9, 10). This is the new creation "*in Christ*", taken from both of the former two creations (both Jew and Gentile), though neither of the former two creations (neither Jew nor Gentile) exists within this new creation (Eph. 2:12-15).

"In Christ", all distinctions of the human race seen in both of the former two creations (in both Jew and Gentile) simply do not exist (Gal. 3:26-29). The new creation "*in Christ*" is exactly what the name implies - an entirely new creation in the human race (2Cor. 5:17). This is why Scripture, following this time, divides the human race into three separate and distinct segments:

1Corinthians 10:32

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.

The parable of the Sower was given with a view to this new entity not only (1) having been brought into existence but also (2) being extended the opportunity to bring forth fruit for the kingdom. The parable of the Sower looks out ahead to that time when the kingdom would be taken from Israel (because of the nation's failure to produce fruit) and given to a nation which would produce "the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43).

Only in the last part of the parable is that expected of the one new man during the present dispensation seen. Unlike barren Israel, overcoming and fruit-bearing are seen there. Thus, it is revealed at the beginning, before God ever brought this new creation into existence, that not all those comprising the one new man - not all Christians - would bring forth fruit.

Most popular commentators, because they have no understanding of the doctrine of the Salvation of the Soul, maintain that only the fourth type of soil represents a saved person. I hope to prove to you otherwise. All of these things are set forth in the parable itself. But, after responding to the disciples' question concerning why He was speaking to the multitudes in parables (vs. 10-17), Christ provided them

with interpretative help to further explain the parable of the Sower (vs. 18-23). He went back over the four parts, briefly explaining each part.

The reason Christ provided additional interpretative help for the parable of the Sower is paramount. This parable is *foundational* to the other six which Christ then gave. Correctly understanding the six parables which followed would be contingent on correctly understanding the introductory parable. A properly laid foundation will allow one to properly build on the foundation. But, lay the foundation improperly, and the inverse of that will be equally true, as Christ Himself explained:

Mark 4:13

And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

Then, after giving both the parable of the Sower and the interpretative help, Christ gave the second, third, and fourth parables, apart from any explanation (vs. 24-33). But, after going back inside the house, Christ, responding to another question asked by the disciples, concerning the second parable, provided additional interpretative help for this parable as well (vs. 36-43). And, once back inside the house, Christ also gave the fifth, sixth, and seventh parables (vs. 44-48), providing a very brief explanation concerning several things in the seventh and closing parable (vs. 49, 50).

All seven parables have to do with a people other than Israel (v. 1), with the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens (v. 11), with the Word of the Kingdom (vs. 19-23), and with fruit-bearing (vs. 8, 23). And they have to do with those to whom the future kingdom (the millennial rule) is being offered during the present dispensation, following Israel's rejection of the kingdom and the kingdom being taken from that nation.

Thus, all seven parables have to do with a time following the rejection of the kingdom by Israel and the removal of the kingdom from Israel. And they have to do with the new entity called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel rejected.

The Identity of the Sower

"The Sower" in the parable (the Gk. text has a definite article before "Sower" - a particular Sower) is identified in the explanation to the second parable as the Son of Man, a Messianic title (v. 37; Psa. 8:4-6; Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 16:13-16). Understanding this is foundational for one to properly understand that which should be the central focus of all activity in the lives of Christians in the world today. And, understanding this is foundational as well: one should properly understand that which is the central focus of all activity surrounding the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world today - the search for the bride (Genesis chapter 24). Activity in the lives of Christians and activity in the ministry of the Spirit go hand-in-hand in this respect.

The Word of the Kingdom

The seed which is sown is identified in Jesus' explanation of the parable as the "Word of the Kingdom". This is the message concerning the coming Millennial Kingdom of Heaven – who will reign and rule with Christ; what are the requirements to qualify for same; what the reign will consist of, etc.

The message of the hour at the beginning of the dispensation - one proclaimed throughout Christendom - centered on "the faith", "Salvation of the Soul", the "Word of the Kingdom". This was the message which

Paul referred to as "my gospel" (Rom. 16:25), "our gospel" (2Cor. 4:3), and "the glorious gospel of Christ [lit., 'the gospel of the glory of Christ']" (2Cor. 4:4); this was the message which Paul had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world (Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:11-12, 16; 2:7); and this was the message which Paul and others, during the first few decades of the existence of the Church, "preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:5-6, 23).

This teaching concerning the "Salvation of the Soul", and this "Great Salvation" became so much of a part of Paul's ministry, that he called it *my gospel* (Rom. 2:16; 2Tim. 2:8). (Note: this is not *another* gospel, but is a deeper revelation included in the truth of the *whole* gospel.)

In learning Paul's gospel, one must realize that it first differentiates between two major areas of Scripture. These are the teachings on eternal life or death as opposed to millennial life or death. Paul wrote mainly (but not *exclusively*) about the subject of eternal life or death in the book of Romans. He carefully explained man's lost and depraved condition and the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross that can save him. Then, after covering these subjects, he introduced the study of millennial life or death. In later epistles, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, he expanded the teaching of *my gospel* and gave the life-changing details.

This would be a good place to re-emphasize that these are not new truths previously unknown to the Church; these truths were taught by many of the early Church fathers, and they have been taught by a remnant throughout the Church age up until now. But for the most part, due to the work of the leaven (Matthew 13:33), they have been buried in the dust of traditional doctrine. These truths were first taught by the Lord. In the Old Testament, they were buried as a mystery – that is, these truths were evidenced by shadows and types, and could only be seen with the hindsight of New Testament teachings.

Hebrews 2:3

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

The Gospel of the Grace of God though, as it has to do with both those sown in the field and the present work of the Spirit, is another matter entirely. *An individual must pass "from death unto life" before he can be extended the opportunity to bring forth fruit for the kingdom.* He must become a child of the Owner before he can possess any association with the inheritance awaiting Christ and His co-heirs (John 5:24; Rom. 8:17; Eph. 2:1-5).

Thus, unsaved man must first hear the Gospel of the Grace of God (from those sown in the field). And the work of the Spirit must, correspondingly, begin at this point (as seen in the foundational pattern in Gen. 1:2b-5). Unsaved man must pass "from death unto life" before he can be dealt with relative to the inheritance out ahead. And the Spirit of God is in the world today, first of all, to do a work in unsaved man in this respect. He is present in the world to breathe life into the one who is without life, effecting the birth from above (Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 37:1-10; John 3:3-5). This is the Gospel of the Grace of God.

The Word of the Kingdom must necessarily have as its beginning the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Unsaved man must first hear and accept the *Gospel of the Grace of God* before he can understand the *Gospel of the Glory of Christ*. Only then can the Spirit of God bring to completion the central purpose for His presence in the world today - to search for, find, and remove the bride for God's Son (Gen. 24:33, 36,

58-67). This is the *Gospel of the Glory of Christ* (the glory which will be seen in the coming kingdom). This is not another gospel, but is part and parcel of the entire gospel.

This is what Jesus meant when He told Nicodemus that he must be born again.

John 3:3

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see [perceive, or understand] the kingdom of God.

Interpretation of the Parable

1. Ones Sown by the Wayside (vs. 4, 19)

Comparing the parable and the explanation (vs. 4, 19), the ones in which the word is sown ("he that received the seed") by the wayside represent individuals (Christians) who hear the Word of the Kingdom but fail to understand the message. And their failure to understand the message allows the "fowls", representing "the wicked one" (Satan), to simply come along and do away with the message, thus devouring the person (vs. 4, 19; 1Peter 5:6-9).

Those who received seed by the wayside, having this type experience in relation to the Word of the Kingdom, would probably represent the majority of Christians hearing this message today. Though they have a capacity to understand the message (they possess spiritual life), they show little to no interest, allowing Satan to perform his destroying and devouring work.

Jesus stated that the seed sown was "the Word of the Kingdom". An unsaved person must *first* hear the Gospel of the Grace of God, which leads him to the born-again experience of salvation of the spirit. Then as the Christian grows, he can *then* hear and understand the Gospel of the Glory of Christ, or the Word of the Kingdom. Jesus included this in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven (Luke 8:10), and stated that it is given unto all Christians to understand this. This is because they now have spiritual life, and therefore can understand the things of the Spirit.

Luke 8:10

And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

But in order to understand this Word of the Kingdom, they must first "*receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your soul*" (James 1:21). This is where most Christians go astray – they fail to do this – for a number of reasons. Most prominent among these reasons is that they are never taught this doctrine by their pastors (How could they? – the vast majority of pastors don't even know it themselves). And when I say the vast majority, if I had to hazard a guess, it would probably be 99.9%.

In Israel, when Christ was on earth the first time, the religious leaders had misled the people (Matt. 12:9-32; 15:1ff; 16:1ff; 23:13, 15). And, as a result, the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in the actions of the Israelites of that day:

Isaiah 6:9-10

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed...

The Jewish people were not only in possession of the written Word of God but were also capable of spiritual perception. They were perfectly capable of understanding this Word. But the religious leaders in Israel – (fundamental religious leaders at that) the Pharisees - had misled the people. As a result, when the Jewish people heard the message, their reaction was no different than the reaction of those described in this first part of the parable of the Sower.

Thus, the whole of the matter, seen almost two millennia ago in Israel, is exactly the same as that which can be seen in Christendom today. *The religious leaders are misleading the people.* And this is something which can be seen mainly in so-called fundamental circles (the liberals are so far removed from reality insofar as sound Biblical doctrine is concerned that they seldom even fit into the matter).

The final state of Christendom during this dispensation - seen in both the chronology of the first four parables in Matt. 13 and the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three - is complete corruption and rejection in relation to the Word of the Kingdom. That is, insofar as this message is concerned (the message seen throughout the parable of the Sower), the whole of Christendom (fundamental and liberal segments alike) will be as the Church in Laodicea at the end of the dispensation - completely leavened (Matt. 13:33; Rev. 3:14-20).

Bear in mind: The Salvation of the Soul – the subject of this book – is the primary, fundamental purpose of our entire walk of faith here on earth as a Christian. This is verified in 1Peter:

1 Peter 1:9

Receiving the end [the end goal, or the entire purpose] of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Those in the Laodicean Church, as those in Israel at Christ's first coming, are seen in possession of the Word of God and capable of spiritual perception. But those in today's Church are also seen in exactly the same condition as those in Israel, described in Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 6:9-10) and in Revelation:

Revelation 3:17

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

Israel, in the nation's blinded condition, didn't heed the message; and the Church, in its blinded condition is not going to heed the message either. But a number of *individuals* in Israel did heed the message, and their eyes were opened (Matt. 13:15-16; Luke 24:16, 31). And a number of *individuals* in Christendom, too, have heeded and continue to heed the message, and their eyes have been/are being opened (2 Cor. 3:14-18; Rev. 3:18).

But one may ask, then, "What about Luke 8 where it says '*lest they should believe and be saved*'? Surely this is speaking of salvation by grace – they simply did not believe?"

Luke 8:12-13

Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

To this I would reply, what did they not believe? Matthew 13:19 says, speaking of this same individual, that it was "the Word of the Kingdom" they did not believe. If you think this person was not saved, and therefore did not believe the Gospel of the Grace of God, then you would have to admit that the second person – "they on the rock" (vs. 13 above) must have *lost* his salvation, because he believed at first, and then fell away after a while. The "*believe and be saved*" in Luke 8:12 is referring to ultimately being saved into the kingdom – Salvation of the Soul. This "belief", or *faithfulness*, is ongoing, and causes the believer to strive to excel in the race. It is the ongoing belief from the moment he is born again until he dies that leads to his ultimate sanctification. It is the present-tense Salvation of the Soul which results in rewards, instead of suffering loss, at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The "Word of the Kingdom" contains the message that Christians have been delivered from their old bondage to sin – that they no longer *have no choice* but to serve sin. But the message does no good if the Christian does not believe it – it needs to be appropriated. Being saved in the above verse can apply to being delivered from a Christian's bondage to particular sins. But this deliverance (saving) must be appropriated through faith (belief) – Paul gives us this same thought in Romans when he says:

Romans 6:11-12

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

We see this belief described in Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:38-39

Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Here is a very clear separation of Christians into two groups:

1. The just – those who live by faith – they that believe to the saving of the soul.
2. The carnal – those who draw back unto perdition (Strong's 684 – perdition, destruction, waste, perish). This "perdition" is the same word used as the ultimate destination of the "broad way" (destruction):

Matthew 7:13

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Jesus taught and explained the Parable of the Sower in three different gospels – the first is in Matthew, which we quoted earlier. Then in Mark 4:13-20, He gives a slightly different explanation; and in Luke 8:11-15 He gives yet more information. In Matthew, we saw that they "did not understand it". Then in Mark we saw that "Satan came *immediately*" and snatched it away. Then in Luke we saw the reason Satan snatched it away – which was, "lest they believe and be saved." Another way of saying they did not believe would be that they *rejected* it after a short consideration.

Although the Word of the Kingdom is primarily in view here, other important doctrinal principles emerge in the parable. Throughout the parable the Lord carefully explains that all our fruitfulness depends on our *doctrinal receptivity*. Much seed has been poured out on the ground, and we saw that the seed is "the Word of the Kingdom". But much of the seed never germinates, because "the evil one snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart". The words in Luke indicate that the "catching away" takes place almost during the act of hearing. From all this, a momentous principle emerges:

Fruit in the fruitful – all that is good in a man's life – lies in the seed, not in the soil: *therefore to reject the seed condemns the character to perpetual barrenness*. Where there is no softness, no hunger of spirit to absorb the Word, Satan "immediately" removes the truth as it lies on the surface of the heart. Therefore, the life remains seedless, rootless, treeless, and fruitless.

Again, I would emphasize the utter importance of getting this parable right. It is the foundation parable, and if you get it wrong, you will miss the point of all that follows in Matthew 13, and even beyond. If you persist in the belief of the Doctrine of Balaam that all born-again Christians will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, *then you yourself are in danger of being the person described in Luke 8:12*. Consider it well, dear brothers and sisters. It is absolutely vital.

Unfortunately, because of the work of the leaven in Matthew 13:33, this describes the vast majority of Christians alive today. Most do not believe the Word of the Kingdom, because it is almost impossible to hear it preached from any pulpit, anywhere in the world, in today's Laodicean Church. And even if it is preached somewhere, most will not receive it because (1) it does not agree with what they have been taught, and (2) it offends the flesh, which prefers to believe there are no further requirements on their part to enter the future Kingdom of Heaven beyond initial salvation of the spirit.

The Soil of the Stony Places (Matt. 13:5-6, 20-21)

Comparing the parable and the explanation (vv. 5, 6, 20, 21), the ones sown into stony places represent individuals who hear the Word, understand the Word, and receive it joyfully. These are individuals who get excited about that which they have heard and learned. There is new-found joy and excitement in their lives.

But, before they can become sufficiently grounded in this Word (they have no "deepness of earth," they have no "root"), "tribulation or persecution" takes its toll. They endure "for awhile"; but, in the symbolism of the parable, when "the sun ['tribulation or persecution']" begins to beat down in all its strength, because of their lack of root (maturity in the faith), *they wither away* (vv. 5, 6, 21).

In the text, "tribulation or persecution" occurs "because of the word" - because of individuals hearing and receiving *the Word of the Kingdom*. There is no message in existence which Satan will marshal his forces against as he will against the message surrounding the coming kingdom of Christ. This message has to do, centrally, with a change in the government of the earth. Satan and his angels presently rule over the earth, within the existing kingdom of the heavens; but a new order of Rulers is about to be brought forth - Christ and His co-heirs. Satan and his angels are to be put down, with Christ and His co-heirs then taking the kingdom.

Revelation 11:15

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world [Satan's present rule] are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The Word of the Kingdom is a message which has *this end* in view. It is a message having to do with *Christ ruling the earth* in that coming day, ruling in the stead of Satan; and it is a message having to do with *Christians occupying positions as co-heirs with Christ* in that day, ruling in the stead of the fallen angels presently ruling with Satan. And this is something which Satan will do *all within his power* to prevent. Thus, one could only expect a message dealing centrally with this subject to come under attack *as no other message*; and this is exactly the way Scripture presents the matter.

In Eph. 3:1-11 this message is seen as something presently being made known "by [*lit.*, 'through'] the Church" to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places [Satan and his angels]" (v. 10). The message being made known has to do with the fact that Satan and his angels are about to be replaced, and it has to do with individuals presently responding in a positive manner to the invitation (being extended by the Holy Spirit in the world) to have a part with Christ in His administration in that coming day (Gen. 24:36, 58).

And in Eph. 6:10ff a spiritual warfare is seen raging because of that which is presently being made known through the Church to Satan and his angels. Satan will, first of all, do everything within his power *to prevent* Christians from hearing this message; and, should Christians hear this message, he will then do everything within his power *to do away with or destroy* this message, thus *devouring* Christians.

At this point Satan brings about "tribulation or persecution" in the life of the one hearing and understanding the message. And note again the wording of the text. Tribulation or persecution arises in the life of such an individual "because of the word," because of *the Word of the Kingdom*. He has heard and joyfully received this Word. While it is true that this persecution comes from the unsaved world, as has been seen in the Christian martyrs throughout these last 2,000 years, this tribulation or persecution can also come from other Christians. Unsaved man out in the world often has nothing to do with all of this. He is "dead in trespasses and sins," *completely incapable* of operating in the spiritual realm. And not only can this tribulation or persecution often come from other Christians, many times it can come more specifically from those in positions of leadership, exactly as in Israel when this offer was open to the nation almost two millenniums ago (e.g., Luke 11:52; John 9:22).

Luke 11:52

Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

The person, through this tribulation or persecution, is "offended [Gk. *skandalizo*, "scandalized"]" (v. 21). That which he has heard, understood, and accepted is associated by these leaders with error, cultism, etc. And, because of his lack of maturity in the faith, he is overcome. He simply gives up; he quits; he falls away. And Satan wins the victory in his life.

Ones Sown Among Thorns (Matt. 13:7, 22)

This brings us to the third soil - those that received seed among the thorns. That the thorns are the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in is clearly stated

(Mark 4:18). Here again, these persons "hear the word"; but the point being made concerning this type of soil is that they "bring forth no fruit to perfection." Fruit can only be brought forth in a saved person. Salvation of the spirit is being born again by the Word of God, not bearing fruit. Salvation of the soul, however, requires the bearing of fruit (by laying down [losing] your life and allowing the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in you). Both the stony-ground Christians and the thorny-ground Christians *failed to endure*. The stony-ground Christian failed to endure to the end because of *tribulation* and persecution and thereby failed to produce fruit. The thorny-ground Christian failed to endure because of *temptation* – cares of this world, etc. The Scripture clearly states in Matthew 10:22 that he that *endureth to the end* shall be saved (this verse has both physical and spiritual applications.) This verse can never be explained satisfactorily by a teacher who has no knowledge of Salvation of the Soul.

These believers are interested only in the things that characterize this age, and not the one to come. They are interested only in money and all that money can buy: houses, cars, clothes, prestige, etc. The thorny-ground believers are quite common amongst all Christians in these last days; those who are saved and that is all; those who are carnal and totally involved in this "age" for what they can get during this lifetime. Hence, they become unfruitful (verse 22b). When examined closely, all unfruitful believers appear to be interested only in having a "fire escape" from hell, while they profit as much as possible from this present age, at ease and undisturbed. They are unwilling to "lose their lives" of pleasure here on earth.

The Word of God delivers a strong warning to all teachers who go after the deceitfulness of riches and the worries of this age; who "will exploit you with false words" (2 Pet. 2:1-3). James 3:1 sternly warns that teachers will receive a stricter judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Ones Sown into Good Ground (Matt. 13:8, 23)

The "good" ground represents believers who, after receiving the seed (the word of the kingdom), bring forth spiritual fruit. They have no fear of the tribulation or persecution that could fall on them, because their hope and testimony is that of the coming kingdom of Christ. They also have no worry for this age; and they are generally not involved in environmentalism, protest demonstrations, or politics to save the world from its own evil. They recognize the sovereignty of God, Who has decreed the end to all things, including the earth; and they know that this earth will be redeemed by Christ for a thousand years before it is consigned to flames.

These believers are also wise concerning the riches of this age. They know those who would be rich fall into "*temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men into ruin and destruction*" (1 Tim. 6:9). They know that for a rich man it is difficult to enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 19:23). They know that the love of money is the root of all evil, while the love of Christ and hope (anticipation) of the kingdom is the root from which all spiritual fruit springs forth. Their hope is to be a member of the "mysteries of the kingdom"; those who will produce spiritual fruit, earning for themselves eternal riches in the kingdom (Titus 2:12-13). Hence, they live by faith, faith that comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

The fourth part of the parable presents matters after an entirely different fashion. Those sown "into good ground" represent individuals who hear the Word (first part of the parable); they understand the Word and refuse to allow "tribulation or persecution" to deter them as they progress toward maturity in the Word (second part of the parable); and they keep their eyes fixed on the goal out ahead, rather than on the things of this present world system (third part of the parable).

They hear, understand, and grow in the Word. Tribulation or persecution doesn't stop them; and they do not allow themselves to become sidetracked by the "cares of this age," the "deceitfulness of riches," or the "pleasures of life." These are individuals who refuse to become entangled "with the affairs of this life," knowing that a crown lies out ahead *for those who "strive lawfully"* (2 Tim. 2:4, 5).

Thus, these are individuals who overcome and bring forth fruit. These are individuals who overcome *the world* (1 John 5:4), *the flesh* (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5), and *the Devil* (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9), rather than being overcome by one or all of the three. And, as a result, they bring forth fruit. They are the only ones who do bring forth fruit among the four groups mentioned, and they bring forth in varying amounts -- "some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold."

These individuals are the only ones who fulfill the purpose for their very existence - bringing forth fruit where Israel had failed, qualifying themselves to occupy positions with Christ in the coming kingdom of the heavens. These are the ones who will be allowed to ascend the throne with Christ in that coming day, occupying positions *exactly commensurate with their fruit-bearing*.

Outcome of Sowing

This parable, finally, teaches there are three kinds of good ground believers: those who produce a hundredfold, those who produce sixty, and those who produce thirty (verse 23b). Perhaps the amount of fruit that each produces is indicative of how much truth of the kingdom each sees and to which each therefore commits his life. This kind of commitment would automatically cultivate the stones and the thorns out of their lives. These three amounts of fruit-bearing also represent three major levels in the coming kingdom: (1) the highest level, reserved for believers bringing forth a hundredfold; (2) the second highest level for the believer bringing forth sixty and (3) the lowest level for those bringing forth thirty. These three levels of rule are seen in other parables of Matthew.

Positions in the coming kingdom of Christ are to be earned, not passed out in an indiscriminate manner (Matt. 20:21-23). Individuals appearing before Christ in that day will receive *exactly what each, through fruit-bearing, has earned*. Each will receive "his own reward according to his own labor" (1Cor. 3:8). (The word translated "reward" in the N.T. is from the Greek word *misthos* [*misthapodosia* in Hebrews], which has to do with "payment," or "wages" for services rendered. And it will be *exact*. The payment will be *exactly commensurate with services rendered*.)

Individuals bringing forth no fruit will receive no payment. There will have been no fruitful labor, and, consequently, wages will not be forthcoming. Instead, they will "suffer loss" (1Cor. 3:15).

On the other hand, individuals bringing forth fruit will receive payment. There will have been fruitful labor, and, consequently, wages will be forthcoming. Each will "receive a reward" (1Cor. 3:14). There will be "a just recompense of reward ['a just payment, wages']" (Heb. 2:2; 11:26).

As previously mentioned, in the parable of the Sower these individuals bring forth fruit in varying amounts -- "some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold" (vv. 8, 23). And payment for the varying amounts, seen in the parable of the pounds in Luke 19:11-27, would be exactly commensurate with their individual fruitfulness.

In the parable of the pounds, ten servants were each given one pound. Each was given a portion of his

Lord's business to use during the time of his Lord's absence, in order that he might be accorded the opportunity to bring forth an increase. One servant brought forth a tenfold increase; and the Lord, upon His return, gave him authority over ten cities. Another servant brought forth a fivefold increase; and the Lord, at this time, gave him authority over five cities. But a third servant failed to use that entrusted to him, and he was not only denied governmental authority in the kingdom, but he was also severely rebuked by his Lord.

No one argues (to my knowledge) against the "good ground" persons being saved. But the bearing of fruit is the whole point of the parable. Those who bear fruit will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, because they will qualify for Salvation of the Soul at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Some will bear more fruit than others will, and these will be rewarded accordingly. The Luke version says in verse 15 that the good ground Christians brought forth *fruit with patience*. Patience (longsuffering) is listed in Galatians 5:22 as one of the fruits of the Spirit. Fruit (after wisdom) is the principal thing, dear brother or sister. Get fruit, and while you're at it, get some more (an hundredfold): and so shall you prosper in the coming Kingdom of Heaven. Let the Spirit of God produce patience in you through the trials and tribulations He brings in your life. And then "*let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*" This is the road to Salvation of the Soul; and God desires very much that every Christian should be on this road.

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

(Matt. 13:24-30; 37-43)

Matthew 13:24-30

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Matthew 13:37-43

He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous [holy] shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The explanation of this parable by our Lord in connection with the first parable does not leave us in doubt as to the exact meaning. Following is a graphic depiction of the Lord's explanation of the parable:

The Sower is the Son of Man.
The field is the world.
The good seed are children of the kingdom.
The tares are the children of the wicked one (the devil).
The enemy that sowed the tares is the devil.
The harvest is the end of the age.
The reapers are the angels.

A careful study of these representations will eliminate completely all guesswork on the interpretation of the parable.

The parable of the sower and the parable of the tares are bound together chronologically and personally. The Sower, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, goes forth sowing seed, which are the children of the kingdom. AFTER the children of the kingdom have been placed in the field (the world), Satan comes along and sows tares, which are the children of the devil, AMONG the wheat, or among the children of the kingdom.

The opening statement in each of these succeeding parables – "the kingdom of the heavens is like..." - must be understood, contextually, in the sense - *the kingdom of the heavens continues like...* There is a chronological continuity of thought after this fashion as one moves through these parables, something which must be recognized if the parables are to be properly understood.

The Word of the Kingdom

Satan and his angels presently rule from a heavenly sphere over the earth. And this heavenly sphere is that realm in which Christ and His co-heirs will reside during the coming age when they rule from the heavens over the earth, following Satan and his angels being cast out (Rev. 12:4, 7-9). This is the message about the coming Kingdom.

The complete parabolic section in Matthew chapter thirteen is introduced and concluded after a similar fashion. And seeing how this is done, the *peril* underlying the second through seventh parables can be readily ascertained.

In the parable of the Sower, setting the stage for the remaining parables, "the Word of the Kingdom" is in view (vs. 19-23). *This is a message pertaining to Christian faithfulness during the present dispensation, with a view to occupying positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom of the heavens during the coming age.* That is to say, the Word of the Kingdom is a message about the realm presently occupied by Satan and his angels, which Christ and His co-heirs will one day occupy.

Then, concluding all seven parables, Christ stated relative to the parables, "*Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of the heavens is like unto...*" (v. 52). Again, the Word of the Kingdom is in view. The instruction to which Christ referred is instruction in exactly the same thing seen in the introductory parable, the parable of the Sower - i.e., instruction in the Word of the Kingdom.

So then, it is the proclamation of the offer of the future kingdom of the heaven – The Word of the Kingdom - (referred to on both sides of these six parables) which will be corrupted and even destroyed because of the conditions described in these parables. Understanding the Word of the Kingdom is the major motivator for Christians to strive to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (future). When this motivation is

lost, dire consequences result in the Body of Christ – unfortunately, although this loss was prophesied by Christ Himself, such is the state of Christianity today.

The Parable

The Parable of the Tares supplies an explanation of Christendom as it has existed all through these almost twenty centuries, and as it is today; a *mixed* state of affairs; the true and the false side by side; Rome and her daughters masquerading under the guise of Christianity. The "field" represents the world, in which the wheat and the tares "grow *together*". This mixed state of affairs has resulted from the work of the enemy at the beginning of this dispensation, the effects of which are with us till this day.

This parable, like the former, also supplies a most conclusive refutation of the unscriptural dreams of post-millenarians. They believe that, through the preaching of the Gospel (under the blessing of God), the cause of Christ will extend until the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. But Christ here explicitly declared that the wheat and the tares should "grow together *until the harvest*", which He defined as "the end of the age." He gave no hint that the "tares" would gradually die out, or that they would decrease in numbers; instead He announced that, at the end, they would be found in such quantity as to need binding "in bundles." So much for "Kingdom Now" theology.

The *connection between* this parable and the former one is most marked. The Sower of the good seed is the same, "the Son of Man"; the "field" is the same, as is "the world" (v. 38). But there is one thing said about the "seed" here which is very striking. In verse 19 it is called "the *Word of the Kingdom*", while in verse 38 we read "the good seed are the *children* of the kingdom." Like produces like: the Word of the Kingdom produces sons of the kingdom: the fruit is according to the Seed!

The prominent thing in this second parable of the series is the enemy and his work. Let us consider:

1. The Time when he worked.

This was "while men slept" (v. 25); that is, at *nighttime*. In other words, it was under cover of the *darkness* that the Devil sowed his tares. This is characteristic of Satan, for he hates the light: secrecy, stealth, and dishonesty are his favorite tactics. But mark you, the Sower Himself did not sleep: He slumbers not, neither is He weary. Nor does Satan. He is ever on the alert, going about, "seeking whom he may devour." He is the personification of perpetual motion.

"While men slept." The reference is to the unwatchful condition which soon developed among the Lord's people. The presence of the "tares" among the wheat was evidenced at a very early date. To the Thessalonians the apostle declared, "The mystery of iniquity does *already* work" (2 Thess. 2:18). John had to say, "You have heard that Antichrist shall come; *even now* are there many Antichrists" (1 John 2:18). Jude wrote, "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (v. 4). To the Church at Pergamos Christ said, "*I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam . . . so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which thing I hate*" (Rev. 2:14-15).

2. The Method He Employed.

First, we are told that the Son of Man sowed good seed in His field (vs. 24, 37). Then we are informed that the Devil turned farmer (v. 25). Satan is no originating genius, but is always an imitator. He produces counterfeits of the works of God. It is important for Christians to know this, so that they may be on their guard. If we study Scripture we should not be ignorant of his devices (2Cor. 2:11). We should carefully note that as the enemy mimicked Christ, he did not sow thorns or thistles - had he done so his work would have been easily detected, and there would have been no difficulty in distinguishing the false from the true. No, he sowed "tares". That the "servants of the householder" recognized the tares as soon as they sprang up does not conflict with our last statement, for it is the *apostles* who are here in view, and *they* were specially endowed with the Holy Spirit, and so had a greater measure of discernment perhaps than any since.

3. The Identity of the Tares

The tares are the children of the Wicked One. Tares are people who are not really Christians, whatever they may profess, but who mingle with Christians and who, whether by deliberate intention or otherwise, further the deep-laid and sinister designs of the Adversary by spreading corruption in doctrine or conduct, or both.

Many such men crept into the Church even in the Apostolic Age, but it is in the second and third centuries, in the time of pagan persecution, when the primitive purity of the Church began to decline; it is here that we find the most complete proof of our Lord's unerring ability to forecast coming events. It is the Smyrna epoch that is to be seen here. During that Smyrna period, multitudes of grievous wolves entered stealthily into the fold not sparing the flock, just as Paul said would be the case after his departure; and many more arose, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Everywhere the Church became corrupt, and the effect, or influence, of this over-sowing of the wheat field with tares has continued, even to the end of the age; that is to say, even to our own times.

These "tares" are unsaved men who act like Christians. When the "servants" first discovered what the enemy had done, they wanted to root out the tares (v. 28). But the Master forbade them, saying, "Nay; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them" (v. 29). It is only when they are both *fully ripe* that the farmer can with safety separate them. Until the harvest time the tares present a fair picture to the eye. As these imitation blades, green and flourishing, grow side by side with the real wheat, there is every prospect of a bountiful yield. But appearances are deceptive, and much of the product will prove only a disappointment and mockery to those who have spent so much time and labor on their cultivation. "All is not gold that glitters." At the Harvest-time there is going to be a great disillusionment. At that time, it will appear that Christ's flock is indeed a "little" one.

This parable, then, gives a remarkable exposé of one of the methods employed by Satan. He seeks to destroy God's testimony on earth by introducing a spurious Christianity, a clever imitation of the real thing. And this parable reveals that he works from within: he sowed the "tares" *among* the wheat! Satan has an *imitation Gospel*. This is clearly implied in the solemn warning given in Gal. 1:7-9. It is more plainly intimated in 2 Cor. 11, where we are told, "*false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness*" (vs. 13-15). The principal agents of Satan are to be found, not in the bars or the gambling casinos, etc., but in our seminaries and in the pulpits. These are not advocating lawlessness, but are preaching

"righteousness"; but "being ignorant of *God's* righteousness" they are "*going about to establish their own righteousness*" (Rom. 10:3). It is a mingling of Law and Gospel, and multitudes are deceived thereby.

Satan has an *imitation Church*. Christ is now building His Church, a Church which will include all the saved of this present dispensation, and none who are not members thereof will be saved. The Devil has caricatured this also. The Catholic Church professes itself to be the "spouse of Christ", and her ministers insist there is no salvation to be found outside of their pale. They profess the name of Christ, and hold some of the great fundamentals of His teaching. But artfully mingled with these are the deadly errors of Paganism. But so clever is the imitation, so subtly are the Scriptures appealed to in support of their pretensions, that millions are deluded by their soul-destroying system. "*There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Prov. 14:12).

The Catholic Church probably holds the greatest number of tares.

Satan will, in God's timing, even be permitted to bring forth an *imitation Christ*. This will be his masterpiece. Much is said in Scripture concerning him. He is the great *Antichrist*. He will have power to work miracles; he will at first claim to be the true Christ come back to earth. Multitudes will be deceived by him so that the entire world will wonder after him (Rev. 13:3). Yes, the Devil sows "tares" - imitation wheat - *not* thorns and thistles.

4. The Enemy's Success.

Observe that in *this* parable we do not read of any opposition or hindrances to the growth of the tares, like we did in the first parable concerning the wheat. No mention is here made of any soil uncongenial to the Devil's seed. There is no "wayside" ground, too hard for them to penetrate. There are no "thorns" to choke them, for they will thrive anywhere. There is no mention made of "fowls of the air" coming to catch them away. All external conditions and circumstances are favorable to the growth of *this* seed. No cultivation is needed; they will grow of themselves. These are weeds which, as we all know too well, will grow anywhere.

The enemy's success is plainly intimated by the *prominence* given to the "tares" in this parable. This comes out very clearly and most solemnly in verse 36. When Jesus had sent the multitude away, and had gone into the house with His disciples, they said, "Declare unto us the parable *of the tares* of the field", not "the parable of the good seed *and* the tares" (see vs. 24-25). It is the tares and not the wheat that dominate and occupy the larger portion of the field. The mention of "bundles" in verse 30 bears out the same thought.

The Owner of the field *forbade* any interference with the tares. This is a point which has perplexed many. *Why* did the Lord permit the Enemy to sow his "tares"? And why has He permitted them *for so long*, to occupy the principal part of the field? In other words, *why* has God allowed the Devil such long-continued freedom? This is not so difficult to answer as many may suppose. They overlook the fact that the leaders of this world rejected its rightful Sovereign; that the Jews preferred Barabbas. Having chosen a murderer in preference to the Lord of Life, both Jews and Gentiles have *reaped what they sowed*. The Devil was "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:14), and having refused the Savior, this great soul-destroyer has ruled over them even to this day!

The *time* for God to stop this is to be "the end of the age" (v. 39). The Greek word is *not* "kosmos", as in John 1:10, but "aion." There is another age to follow this, namely, the Millennium.

Let us note now the *order* of its procedure. *"In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My barn"* (v. 30). The tares are gathered into "bundles" *before* the wheat is actually garnered. In spite of their promising and attractive appearance, everything which has not sprung from the Seed sown by the Son of Man is ultimately to be consigned to everlasting burnings: as He Himself declared, *"Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up"* (Matthew 15:13).

But what we would particularly direct attention to is the "gathering together" of the tares *into bundles*. There is no actual casting of them into the fire at this preliminary stage, no removal of them from the field. It is the separation of the tares in the field, so as to leave the "wheat" distinct, and ready for garnering. The wheat is gathered into the Barn *before* the tares are "burned" - sure proof of the removal of Church of the Firstborn from this scene *prior* to the descent of God's judgment of the world.

As we survey current events in the light of Matthew 13:30 it is abundantly clear that the process of binding the tares into bundles is proceeding in various directions, and proceeding with amazing rapidity. In fact it is one of the more prominent of the "signs of the times."

Take the *commercial* world. The individual is fast becoming a non-entity, as most business men know to their sorrow. Co-operation, organization, amalgamation, is the order of the day. Trusts, combines, syndicates, unions, are the "bundles" into which the interests of industry are now being bound. "Gather the tares into bundles"; the Divine command has already gone forth!

Take the *social* world. Clubs, guilds, fraternities, are multiplied on every side. "Class distinctions" are more and more resented by the masses. Social barriers which have existed for centuries are rapidly being broken down; while in many countries, socialism and communism, which aim at the destruction of *individual* enterprise, are seeking to gather all into one great State "bundle." Yes, the word "gather" the tares into bundles has already gone forth.

In the *ecclesiastical* sphere the same thing is equally noticeable and prominent. Interdenominational efforts and movements are multiplying. The unification of Christendom is the ideal of many, and the goal for which her leaders are aiming. Protestantism is virtually a spent force, and the hindrances and obstacles against the Papacy yet gathering all Christendom under her wings are rapidly disappearing. Those who understand prophecy know well that it will not be long before she attains that ambition for which she has so long worked, and that one huge ecclesiastical "bundle" will be formed. Yes, the command to "gather" the tares *has* gone forth!

Second, what a solemn warning is here against *unwatchfulness*! It was "while men slept" that the Enemy came and sowed his tares. Beware of sloth and the relaxation of vigilance. Remember the words of Christ to His disciples, *"What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch"* (Mark 13:37).

Third, mark Christ's *love* for His own. When forbidding the servants to root up the tares, He said, *"Nay, lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them"* (v. 29). How much He must think of the "wheat": He had rather the "tares" grow, than that a single blade of the wheat be injured!

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Matthew 13:31-32

Another parable he put forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

General Comments

A common interpretation of the parable is that the mustard seed symbolizes or represents the Gospel of Christ, and the field the world. The Gospel is placed in the world and it begins to grow until it becomes the largest of herbs. The birds are supposed to symbolize people who find safety and refuge in the branches of the tree, which is Christianity. We must learn, however, that the symbolism of the parables has been set by the Lord, and He told us that the fowls of the parable (vs. 4 and 19) symbolize the wicked one, or Satan. It is true, however, that a grain of mustard seed represents the Gospel of Christ which the Lord Jesus took and sowed in the world.

The smallness of the seed represents the insignificance of the beginning of the Christian movement. But from that small seed - that is, from the least of beginnings - sprouted the mustard bush which grew until it became the greatest among herbs. Christianity spread very rapidly from the days of its inception. I have heard some individuals speak of the comparative lack of growth of Christianity during the days of our Lord, and refer to the fact that at the time of His ascension only 120 converts had been made; however, we know that such is not the case, for Paul mentioned in 1Cor. 15 that in the resurrection appearances, He appeared to over 500 of the brethren at one time. In Acts 2:41, after only one sermon, 3,000 converts were added to the Church; likewise, in Acts 4:4, 5,000 were saved after Peter's preaching. There were many, many followers of our Lord, and Christianity really spread like the growth of a mustard bush into the largest of herbs from the least of seeds.

But what is overlooked by many commentators is the statement that the mustard bush, the greatest of herbs, became a tree. That is abnormal and unnatural. In the realm of nature, herbs are herbs, trees are trees, grass is grass, etc.; but in the parable of the mustard seed the Lord tells of a vegetable becoming a tree. After it became a tree the birds came and lodged in the branches.

What does a tree in Scripture symbolize? In Judges 9:8-15, trees represent nations. In Daniel 4, the tree represents a nation as a world power. In the New Testament the Lord speaks of the nation of Israel both as a fig tree and as an olive tree. In Luke 21:29, He speaks of the nation of Israel under the figure of a fig tree, and the Gentile nations, under the figure of "all the trees." I don't believe it is open to question concerning the symbolism of a tree in Scripture. It must mean a world power.

Now when our Lord says the kingdom of heaven is like unto a mustard seed which grew into the largest of herbs and then became a tree, it is in keeping with the symbolism of the entire Scripture. Christianity started from the smallest and most insignificant of beginnings, developed into the largest of spiritual movements, and then something happened: it became a tree; that is, Christianity became a world power. On October 28, 312 A.D., Constantine the Great decreed that Christianity should be the world religion. This fiat opened the door for political and ecclesiastical intrigue, and of a truth, CHRISTIANITY BECAME A WORLD POWER OVERNIGHT.

Our Lord said in the parable that when a mustard bush became a tree, the birds would find lodgment in the branches; and when Christianity became a world power, Satan, the evil one, found lodgment within its organization. This is the day of our Lord's rejection, and it is supposed to be the day of the church's rejection. The church is not supposed to be a world power until the Lord returns to the city of Jerusalem to rule and reign for 1,000 years; then, as consort queen, the church is to rule and reign over the world with Christ.

The subtlety of Satan is nowhere manifest to a greater degree than in the way he misguides churches and Christians into programs of world betterment and reform instead of faithfully witnessing to the lost. Today we witness the sad spectacle of the church majoring in trying to produce the effects of the Gospel rather than preaching the Gospel and letting the effects follow as is natural and as they inevitably will. What Satan could not do by persecuting and martyring Christians and hindering the spread of the Gospel, he has accomplished in part by the placing of false Christians among true Christians. The Gospel, nevertheless, has continued to go out to the ends of the earth and Satan has resorted to the scheme of diverting the energy and effort of the church. Social and political reform, humanitarian and benevolent projects, may be worthy causes in themselves, but as such they do not in any way constitute the high calling of the church of the living God.

The Parable

The parable of the mustard seed continues with the same central thoughts set forth in the previous parable, the parable of the wheat and tares. Fruit-bearing remains at the forefront (v. 31), as well as Satan's continuing activity as he seeks to stop Christians from bearing fruit. And the method which Satan uses as he seeks to stop Christians from bearing fruit, revealed in the previous parable, is through sowing tares among the wheat. Then the parable of the mustard seed reveals that which would happen because of this activity of Satan.

In this respect, the parable of the mustard seed is simply a commentary on the previous parable, providing additional explanatory help. In the true sense of the definition of a parable and why the Lord used parables - the parable of the mustard seed was given to help explain the parable which had previously been given, the parable of the wheat and tares.

And the same thing could be said concerning why the Lord gave the parable of the wheat and tares. It was given to help explain a part of the parable given prior to this one, the parable of the Sower. Then, looking ahead to the parable following the parable of the mustard seed - the parable of the leaven - the same thing can be seen. This parable was given to provide additional explanatory help for the parable of the mustard seed.

That's the evident divinely designed interrelationship which exists between the first four parables in Matthew chapter thirteen. The parable of the Sower, the first parable spoken outside the house, by the seaside, introduces the matter; and the succeeding three parables spoken outside the house, by the seaside, simply build, after a successive fashion, on that introduced in the first parable.

Natural, Unnatural Growth

In the second parable - the parable of the wheat and tares - Satan is seen sowing *unsaved*, contrary-minded individuals in the midst of Christians bringing forth fruit, seeking to stop fruit-bearing. This is

how matters had become in Christendom relative to fruit-bearing, with the kingdom of the heavens in view. Then, the parable of the mustard seed presents how matters would continue in this respect.

This parable first depicts a natural growth of the mustard seed, once it germinated. The natural growth of this particular seed would result in an herb, called in the text, "the greatest among herbs." And, beyond that, a natural growth would result in fruit-bearing (v. 32). Thus, Satan's success in stopping fruit-bearing would be contingent on his success in preventing a natural growth of the mustard seed. One would go hand-in-hand with the other.

The mustard seed in the parable represents, not individuals per se, but an entity made up of individuals – the good seed, the children of the kingdom from the previous parable. And a natural or unnatural growth of the mustard seed would represent a natural or unnatural development of those comprising the seed. Should Satan be unsuccessful in his efforts to prevent a natural development of those comprising the mustard seed, growth would eventually result in that which God had intended; and fruit-bearing would ensue.

However, should Satan be successful in his efforts to prevent a natural development of those comprising the mustard seed, growth would eventually result in something other than that which God had intended; and barrenness would ensue. And the latter is exactly what is seen in this parable. The mustard seed is seen growing after an abnormal fashion, showing Satan's success in stopping Christians from bearing fruit through causing an unnatural growth in their ranks. And not only so, but the mustard seed is seen developing so abnormally that it eventually became a tree; and this tree is seen to be of such a nature that "the birds of the air", individuals doing the work of Satan, found a lodging place in its branches (v. 32; vs. 4, 19).

Thus, the third parable, continuing the thought from the second parable, presents the tares being quite effective. They are seen deceiving Christians to the degree that they bring about an unnatural growth in Christendom, resulting in unfruitfulness, barrenness; and the matter is carried to the point that, in the end, the tares even found acceptance among those whom they had deceived.

Through producing an unnatural growth in Christendom – one in which they themselves could find acceptance – the tares stopped Christians from bearing fruit. Then the tares were able to simply settle down in that which they had produced.

But what was the cause of this unnatural growth? It came about through one event, and comparatively it was overnight.

A Tree

1. Symbolism of a Tree

To understand that which is in view, note the symbolism of a tree in Scripture. A "tree" is used in Scripture to symbolize a national power. In Judges 9:8-15, which relates the oldest known parable in the world, "trees" are seen symbolizing nations which had sought to elect a king to reign over them.

Daniel, in his prophecy, refers to the vision of "a tree in the midst of the earth", which "reached unto heaven." And this "tree" is said to symbolize the kingdom of Babylon (Dan. 4:10-12, 20-22). Israel is referred to in Joel's prophecy by a "fig tree" (1:7). And Christ not only referred to Israel through the

symbolism of a "fig tree" during his earthly ministry but He also referred to the surrounding Gentile nations through the symbolism of "all the trees" (Matt. 21:18, 19; 24:32; Luke 21:29).

There can be no question concerning Scripture using "trees" in a symbolic sense to signify national powers. And, remaining within the confines of the symbolism which Scripture itself provides, there can, as well, be no question concerning that which is in view through the mustard seed germinating and eventually becoming a tree. That represented by the mustard seed germinated and became a national power – something which it was not supposed to become at all during the present dispensation, something reserved for the coming dispensation. It became a national power during the time Satan ruled within the kingdom of the heavens; it became a national power within the present kingdom of Satan.

2. In History, During the Present Day

During the early part of the first century, when the apostates first infiltrated the ranks of fruit-bearing Christians, Christianity was looked upon in the Roman world as an illegal religion. And, in some quarters, Christians were looked upon by the Romans as being guilty of treason. Rome practiced emperor worship, and, within this practice, "religion" and "state" became one entity. Christians, on the other hand, were monotheistic and spoke of a King other than Caesar and of a Kingdom other than Rome. Thus, it is little wonder that the Romans looked upon Christians in an illegal and treasonous sense.

It was these basic differences which resulted in all of the Roman persecution, lasting several centuries. But something else also happened during this time. The apostates progressively broke down the barriers separating the Roman Empire and Christianity, until the day came, near the end of the fourth century, when these barriers no longer existed. And this was followed by a merger of Church and State.

Constantine, during the opening years of the fourth century (313 A.D.) put a stop to the persecution of Christians, and he himself later embraced Christianity (for reasons upon which historians differ). And all of this set the stage for that which was to follow.

In the year 380 A.D., Theodosius I issued an edict that made Christianity the exclusive state religion; and, in the year 395 A.D., Christianity was finally recognized as the official and only religion of the Roman Empire. At this point Christianity found itself completely enmeshed within a world power in the sphere of governmental authority over which Satan exercised control, completely out of line with God's plans and purposes for the new creation "in Christ."

Satan already had his false religion in place in Rome when this came about. Thus, those in power within this false religion simply merged their teachings with that of Christianity, and what was formerly pagan in nature was simply given Christian labels. Thus, a great number of tares were inaugurated within Christianity at this point.

With the at-first-reluctant but increasingly enthusiastic consent and participation of Christian Bishops, the church entered upon an apostasy which led to Roman Catholicism and has lasted until the present time. Will Durant (a purely secular historian with no religious axe to grind) comments upon the marriage of Christianity and paganism that came about through Constantine's pretended "conversion" and assumption of church leadership:

Paganism survived...in the form of ancient rites and customs condoned, or accepted and transformed, by an often indulgent Church. An intimate and trustful worship of saints replaced the

cult of pagan gods. Statues of Isis and Horus were renamed Mary and Jesus; the Roman Lupercalia and the feast of purification of Isis became the Feast of the Nativity; the Saturnalia were replaced by Christmas celebration and ancient festival of the dead by All Souls Day, rededicated to Christian heroes; incense, lights, flowers, processions, vestments, hymns which had pleased the people in older cults were domesticated and cleansed in the ritual of the Church. Soon people and priests would use the sign of the cross as a magic incantation to expel or drive away demons. Paganism passed like maternal blood into the new religion, and captive Rome captured her conqueror; the world converted Christianity.

This, though, was not the end result of the previous Roman persecution. That persecution only resulted in Christian growth. As Tertullian, a Christian living during the period of Roman persecution, said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." That which ultimately occurred was caused by the apostates. Their attack was not centered upon the entity itself (as was Rome's attack) but upon that which brought the entity to a fruit-bearing stage. They went back to that upon which the entity was fed and nourished, introducing corruption and destruction at this point.

And the end result was exactly as Christ had foretold. The mustard seed germinated, took an abnormal growth, and became a tree. The abnormal growth, over time, ultimately resulted in barrenness; and Christians found themselves occupying a position which they were not supposed to occupy during the present dispensation at all. They found themselves associated with Gentile world power within the present kingdom of Satan.

And this is a position from which Christianity has never recovered. Down to the present day, though Rome has long since passed off the scene, Christians can still be found involving themselves in activities associated with the tree of Matt. 13:32. They can be seen on every hand involving themselves in the present government after all types of fashions, attempting to exert some type of power in the present kingdom under Satan.

But this is simply not the day when Christians are to rule and reign. That day lies in the future, after Christ has taken the kingdom and Christians have been placed in positions of power and authority.

The entire present system is in its death-throes and will be destroyed by Christ when He returns. Christians having works associated with the present system will one day see their works suffer the same fate which the system is about to suffer. Such works will be destroyed, burned "in fire" at the Judgment Seat; and even though these Christians will be "saved; yet so as by ['through'] fire" (1Cor. 3:11-15), they will be left with nothing of value in relation to the coming kingdom of Christ.

The effort to make the Church a world power has robbed the Church of its spiritual power. It was a sad day for the cause of our Lord when the mustard bush became a tree.

THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

Matthew 13:33

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Often this parable is interpreted in some manner similar to this: the leaven is the gospel, the woman is the Church, three measures of meal is the world, and the hiding of the leaven therein with its working continues until the whole world is saved. With all due respect, these commentators have turned the interpretation into something diametrically opposed to its true meaning. Those who teach such a falsehood "*hold the truth in unrighteousness*".

In the first place, leaven is never used in the Scripture for anything good. In Matthew 16:6-12 our Lord warns His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The disciples at first thought He was speaking of bread, but Jesus then tells them that when He gave this warning He was telling them to beware of the *doctrine* of the Pharisees and Sadducees. In Mark 8:15 we find a further injunction to beware of the leaven of Herod, which was the doctrine of Herod.

Now the doctrine of the Pharisees was the degeneration from true worship into ritualism and formalism, emphasizing the letter of the law and ignoring the spirit of the law. The doctrine of the Sadducees was that of rationalism with its denial of the supernatural, especially the resurrection. The doctrine of Herod was that the government under Herod's control would be the panacea for all this world's ills. Jesus sought to turn His disciples away from such falsehoods and keep their attention focused on Him.

In Lev. 2:11, we have positive prohibition from God Himself of putting leaven in the meal offering. In the next place, "three measures of meal" was not used of our Lord to symbolize the world. He used the "field" as a symbol of the world. Three is a number that has no relation to the world, but is a number that pertains to God.

The true interpretation of the parable of the leaven follows: In the growth and development of the kingdom of heaven in its outward manifestation on earth, which may also be called Christendom, we see a woman who symbolizes a Church - but not the true Church. The true Church is usually characterized by the expression "virgin." This woman, symbolizing the false Church, takes the leaven which Jesus calls false doctrine, and hides this false doctrine in three measures of meal. Three measures of meal symbolize the truth and teaching of the Godhead, or the Trinity, with special emphasis on the Son Who Himself is the wheat crushed and made into meal (or flour, if you prefer).

Leaven is a putrefying agent, producing deterioration in the flour into which it is placed. Our Lord here is speaking of a degeneration which is going to take place in Christendom by the false Church interjecting false doctrine into the truth of the gospel until the whole of Christendom will be permeated with its heresies. Some of the false doctrines introduced into Christendom thus far are (in part): the denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures and their resulting inerrancy; the denial of the Old Testament miracles; the denial of Israel being God's chosen people; the denial of the dates of the writings of the prophets Jonah, Daniel, and parts of Isaiah; the denial of the ability of God to foretell the future; the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity; the denial of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; the denial of His sinless life; the denial of His vicarious death on Calvary's cross; the denial of His physical resurrection and ascent into heaven; the denial of His physical presence at the right hand of God today.

But by far, the most damaging doctrine introduced, as far as born-again Christians are concerned, has been the denial of the Word of the Kingdom - the denial of His physical return to sit on the literal Throne of David in the literal kingdom here on the earth for a literal period of 1,000 years, and the denial of the means through which the Christian can be "counted worthy of that age, and the resurrection of the dead" and be rewarded with participation in this kingdom at the Judgment Seat of Christ. That which is specifically denied is the doctrine of the Salvation of the Soul.

The work of the leaven has been so subtle and sure that today it is difficult to find a place to worship where the leaven has not manifested itself at least in part.

As we have traced the development of the kingdom of heaven we have noted four major attempts of Satan to bring to naught the work of the Lord in the Kingdom of God through its outward expression on the earth. First, Satan martyred Christians. When he (Satan) found that the martyring of Christians did not defeat God's purpose but rather caused it to increase in its development, he turned to that shrewd movement of imitation, so aptly described in the parable of the tares. A pseudo-gospel by a pseudo-minister to pseudo-Christians producing a pseudo-Church made it next to impossible to distinguish from the true. He turned next to the expediency of making the Church a world power as set forth in the parable of the mustard seed, and thereby robbed the Church of its true testimony because of the worldliness of the Church.

But true Christianity continued to spread; and so Satan used a fourth and last means in attempting to thwart the purposes of God through the preaching of the gospel by introducing false doctrines into the pulpits of the land, and thus making it next to impossible for the lost to hear the *true* gospel (which they MUST hear before they can be saved.)

The parable of the leaven is the last of the four parables which Christ gave "outside the house". This parable reveals the conclusion of matters surrounding events covered by the first three parables; and this conclusion is revealed prior to Christ going back inside the house, where He gave three additional parables (with all seven together revealing an entire sequence of events extending from the inception of the Church to the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom).

This is the first mention of "leaven" in the New Testament, and Christ used the word in a symbolic sense, in an unexplained manner, knowing that it could be understood only one way. The Old Testament symbolism surrounding "leaven" and the flow of thought seen in the three parables preceding the first use of this word in the New Testament left no room to question how the word was to be understood. Leaven was a foreign substance added to dough, causing the dough to rise. And the Old Testament, using leaven in a symbolic sense, *always* used the word *only one way* - to symbolize that which caused *corruption and deterioration*.

The Mosaic Law forbade the priests in Israel to use leaven in their rituals (Lev. 2:11). In this respect, the absence of leaven (the absence of a foreign substance) pointed to *purity*, as seen in the first usage of this word in Scripture (Gen. 19:3). Though the priests were forbidden to use leaven in their rituals, in two instances, instructions in the Mosaic economy stated that leaven was to be included in offerings (Lev. 7:13; 23:17); and Amos, centuries later, mentions an offering which was to include leaven as well (4:5).

But in all three of these exceptional instances where leaven was to be included, other offerings are also mentioned; and, in two of these instances, the other offerings are specifically stated to include *blood sacrifices*, to atone for man's sins. And, in the one offering where blood is not specifically mentioned (Amos 4:5), blood could only be inferred from the other offerings which are mentioned (Lev. 7:1-14; 23:5; 27; Exo. 12:1ff; Lev. 16:1ff; Amos 4:4). In the light of both the context and corresponding Scripture elsewhere, leaven could only have been included in these offerings *to show man's sin*. Leaven was included *to show corruption within*, as an offering without leaven was used *to show purity within*.

This can be illustrated by referring to God's command surrounding the second of the festivals in Lev. 23 -

the festival of unleavened bread. Beginning with the day immediately following the death of the firstborn and the application of the blood (the first festival), the Israelites were commanded to refrain from eating anything containing leaven for "seven days", for *a complete period of time* (Lev. 23:5, 6). This pointed to God's truth surrounding the fact that those who had appropriated the blood were then to keep themselves pure for a complete period of time, for the entire duration of their lives which followed. This was true for the Israelites at the time these festivals were instituted, it was true for the Israelites down through the centuries, and it remains true for Christians today. It has been and it remains true for God's people throughout all time (1Cor. 5:6-8).

And within the continuing symbolism shown by these feast days, God instituted a Day of Atonement. This was the sixth of the seven festivals, and it had to do with *shed blood to atone for man's sins* - the sins of those who had previously applied the blood of the paschal lambs (which was immediately followed by God's command not to partake of that containing leaven). The Day of Atonement had to do with a covering provided for the failure of those having previously applied the blood of the paschal lambs to keep themselves pure - their failure to continuously keep themselves separated from that containing leaven.

And exactly the same thing can be seen today through viewing the Christians' present state in the world and Christ's present high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Christians have applied the blood of the Paschal Lamb and have been commanded to keep themselves pure. But Christians, possessing a body of death, just as the Israelites in the past dispensation, experience failure; and, as in the camp of Israel, provision is made for failure. Christ is presently ministering in the heavenly sanctuary, on the basis of His Own blood on the mercy seat, for Christians who sin.

Cleansing, though, is not automatic. Rather, it is conditional. Cleansing is dependent on the Christian acknowledging and repenting of his sins.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In the light of the way in which leaven is *always* used in the Old Testament, Christ could use the word in a symbolic sense - as He did in Matt. 13:33, and in Matt. 16:6 - and His disciples would know exactly what was meant. Or, also in this respect, Paul could use the word in this same symbolic sense in his epistles - as he did in 1Cor. 5:6-8, and in Gal. 5:9 - and the recipients of these epistles would also know exactly what was meant.

But an added feature about the way leaven is used in Matt. 13:33 is the context leading into the use of this word that reveals how this word is to be understood. And exactly the same thing can be seen where leaven is used elsewhere in the New Testament. Every place this word appears, the context always clearly shows the word being used *only one way* - to show corruption and deterioration - in complete keeping with its Old Testament usage.

In Matt. 13:33, the context leading into the use of this word has to do with fruit-bearing and with the method Satan uses to stop Christians from bearing fruit. The preceding two parables reveal Satan introducing *false doctrine*, with a progressive corruption and deterioration following. And the parable of the leaven simply reveals the conclusion of the matter. According to the parable of the leaven, the message surrounding the proffered kingdom during the present dispensation would, near the end of the

dispensation, *become completely leavened*. Corruption introduced at the beginning of the dispensation would progressively permeate the whole of Christendom until that having to do with the proffered kingdom *would be completely corrupted*. And, according to this parable, this is how the dispensation would end.

A Woman – False Teachers

So what was the agency, here represented by a woman, Satan used to introduce false doctrine?

This work of Satan could only have been accomplished through one means - through the promulgation of false doctrine through Satan placing false teachers in the midst of fruit-bearing Christians, leading them away from the truth of the Scriptures, leading them away from an adherence to the faith. And this is exactly the way Scripture elsewhere reveals that the matter occurred.

There are multiplied warnings numerous places in Scripture concerning false teachers who would arise and teach "perverse things", particularly relative to "the faith" (the Word of the Kingdom). And these false teachers would arise, not from the world, but from within Christendom itself. These false teachers would arise from the ranks of Christians, in the Churches (Acts 20:29-32; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:8, 18; 3:7-8; 4:1-4; 2 Peter 2:1ff; Jude 3ff).

As it was surrounding Christ's first coming and the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, so would it be surrounding Christ's second coming and the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Christians. Jewish religious leaders were responsible for that which happened in the past dispensation surrounding the proffered kingdom at Christ's first coming, and Christian religious leaders are responsible for that which is happening during the present dispensation surrounding the proffered kingdom and Christ's second coming.

The religious leaders in Israel followed Christ about the country and sought, at every turn, to speak against that which was being seen and heard. Christ's ministry focused around supernatural signs – these signs were given to confirm the Word Christ was preaching. But the religious leaders would have no part in the matter; and they misled the people, resulting in the nation's rejection of the proffered kingdom and the subsequent crucifixion of the nation's King.

And the situation relative to the proclamation of the Word of the Kingdom throughout the present dispensation has been no different. Christians down through the years have been misled, not by those in the world, but by their own religious leaders. Scripture is very clear on this matter.

1. At the Beginning of the Dispensation

As has already been stated, the message of the hour at the beginning of the dispensation – one proclaimed throughout Christendom – centered on "the faith", the "saving of the soul", the "Word of the Kingdom". This was the message which Paul referred to as "my gospel" (Rom. 16:25), "our gospel" (2Cor. 4:3), and "the glorious gospel of Christ [lit., 'the gospel of the glory of Christ']" (2Cor. 4:4); this was the message which Paul had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world (Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:11, 12, 16; 2:7); and this was the message which Paul and others, during the first few decades of the existence of the Church, "preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:5, 6, 23).

Thus, during the first century of the Church's existence, the message surrounding the proffered kingdom was something universally proclaimed throughout Christendom. And this message could only have been well-known and understood by Christians everywhere, resulting in at least a segment of Christendom developing in a natural fashion and these Christians, as a result, bearing fruit.

It was within a setting of this nature that Satan sowed tares among the wheat, seeking to prevent a natural growth and development of the seed which had been sown; and success in preventing this natural growth and development would, in turn, over time, ultimately result in a barren condition of the plant.

Now, note the problem which Satan faced at the beginning of the dispensation. He faced countering a message which was being proclaimed and received throughout Christendom. Christians who had received the true message were developing after a proper fashion (growing from immaturity to maturity), with a corresponding fruitfulness. To counter the true message, Satan simply placed individuals proclaiming a false message in the midst of those Christians who had received the true message. Then, over time, the false message progressively did its damaging work, accomplishing its purpose.

This false message, once received, resulted in an improper development in Christendom (an improper growth from immaturity to maturity). And, developing after an improper fashion, a corresponding barrenness ensued. And that is how Scripture reveals that Satan stops fruit-bearing. He places individuals with a false message relative to the kingdom among those bearing fruit for the kingdom. The false message takes root, growth becomes progressively unnatural, and fruit-bearing is stymied. Then, the false message continues to take hold until the point is reached where growth becomes so unnatural that fruit-bearing can no longer exist.

A) The Messengers

Both Peter in his second epistle and Jude begin their epistles by exhorting Christians to strain every muscle of their being in the present race of the faith (2 Peter 1:2-11; Jude 3); and in both epistles the reason that this exhortation was necessary was the presence of false teachers in their midst (2 Peter 2:1ff; Jude 4ff).

These are the same false teachers to which Paul referred, who would arise among Christians, take truths concerning the Word of the Kingdom, and distort and twist these truths (Acts 20:30-31); and these are the same false teachers to which Christ had previously referred in the parables in Matthew 13, who would produce an unnatural growth among fruit-bearing Christians.

These are the apostates which Scripture extensively warns Christians about – a type of individual identified by the meaning of the word itself. Our English word, "apostasy", is simply an Anglicized form of the Greek word apostasia. This is a compound word comprised of apo ('from') and stasis ('to stand'). The word means "to stand away from"; and the word refers to a person standing away from a place in which he had previously stood.

The apostasy in view has to do with "the faith" (2 Tim. 2:18; 3:8; Jude 3). Thus, true apostates relative to the faith can only be individuals who had, at one time, received the message concerning the faith; but then, at a later time, they departed from an adherence to this message. These are individuals who had initially heard, understood, received the truth; but then apostatized. They "stood away from" the truth. They turned from the truth, began to speak out against the truth, and, in the process, taught that which was untrue.

These are the type individuals referred to in Paul's warnings in both Acts and his epistles, as well as Peter's and Jude's warnings in their epistles. These are the type individuals – those quite familiar with the matter which they were speaking against – whom Satan knew that he could use the most effectively to do the most damage.

Thus, Satan simply began to place individuals of this nature in the midst of those Christians bringing forth fruit. And they began to "draw away disciples" after themselves (Acts 20:30). They began to reproduce after their kind, resulting in fruit also after their kind, an "evil fruit" (Matt. 7:15-20; 13-14; 21-23). Aside from Paul's identification of these individuals in Acts 20:30 - "*of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things...*" – note Peter's identification of them in 2 Peter 2:18-20:

2 Peter 2:18-20

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

Note particularly the word "knowledge" in verse twenty. These individuals had escaped the "pollutions of the world" through the "knowledge [Gk. epignosis, 'mature knowledge'] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." They had come into a mature knowledge of the things in view – things surrounding the Word of the Kingdom. And having come into a mature knowledge of these things, they turned from these things and began to teach perverse, contrary things.

That these were saved individuals is evident, for an unsaved person cannot even come into a rudimentary knowledge of these things (1Cor. 2:14 [gnosis, the regular Greek word for "knowledge" appears in this passage]), much less the mature knowledge seen in 2 Peter 2:20. Thus, the text can only have to do with saved individuals turning from the central message of that day, distorting and twisting the truth as they taught false doctrine relative to the Word of the Kingdom.

B) Their Message

The teaching of the apostates is spoken of as "damnable heresies [lit., 'destructive heresies' or, 'heresies that lead to destruction']" (2 Peter 2:1). And the destruction in view has nothing to do with salvation by grace through faith (the Christians' presently possessed free gift of eternal life.) Eternal life is not even in view. The destruction has to do solely with the Word of the Kingdom, the subject matter at hand. The apostates taught heresy of a nature which led Christians to a destructive end relative to the proffered kingdom.

Numerous statements are given concerning the teaching and action of the apostates (2 Peter 2:1-3, 10ff; Jude 4, 8ff). But one thing in Peter's second epistle stands out above everything else. There is a septenary structure to Peter's second epistle, with a particular reference to and emphasis upon Christ's return within this structure (1:16-18; 3:4-8).

The apostates are seen "walking after their own lusts ['desires' – desires which would be soulical ('their own desires'), not spiritual (that which the Lord would desire)]" (3:3; 2:18). And, within this type walk, they are seen proclaiming a message which would strike at the heart of all sound Biblical teaching surrounding Christ's return and the Messianic Kingdom:

2 Peter 3:4

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

Then the verses which follow (vs. 5-9) - answering the apostates false message through referring to events beginning with the opening verses of Genesis – make matters very clear that the heart of the apostates' message had to do with denying Christ's return at the end of six thousand years, with attendant destruction on the one hand and attendant blessings on the other. They had willingly allowed the things surrounding this entire panorama of teaching to escape their attention, and they are seen infiltrating the ranks of fruit-bearing Christians everywhere, seeking to promulgate their false doctrine.

The misleading, destructive doctrine proclaimed by the apostates is seen taking numerous forms. But the foundation upon which all their false teaching rested is seen taking only one form - a totally perverted form of the true foundation set forth in Gen. 1:1-2:3 - the God-established foundation upon which all subsequent Scripture rests.

They, in all the various forms that their false teaching took, sought to do away with two things: 1) the septenary (seven-day) structure of Scripture as set forth in the beginning, in Gen. 1:1-2:3, and 2) teachings surrounding Christ's return within the framework of this septenary structure (at the end of six days, at the end of 6,000 years). Then, building on a totally perverted foundation of this nature, the apostates sought to spread all types of destructive heresies relative to the various facets of the Word of the Kingdom among fruit-bearing Christians. And, over time, as seen in the parable of the mustard seed, they were quite successful.

2. At the End of the Dispensation

Near the end of the dispensation (today), relative to the Word of the Kingdom, conditions throughout Christendom are seen to have become completely turned around from the way they existed at the beginning of the dispensation. After almost two millennia, the Word of the Kingdom – taught and understood throughout the Churches at the beginning of the dispensation – is seldom even heard in Christian circles. And, with the message not being proclaimed, Christians throughout the Churches of the land correspondingly have little to no understanding of truths surrounding the coming kingdom.

Thus, during the present day and time, Satan has little need for apostates to infiltrate the ranks of Christians. And, beyond that, though little need exists, Satan would undoubtedly be hard-pressed to find very many *true* apostates. A person, first of all, would have to come into an understanding of the Word of the Kingdom before he could apostatize. And those having a conversant knowledge of this message today – the only ones in a position to apostatize – are few and far between.

That which exists in Christendom today is the aftermath, the end result, of Satan placing leaven, false doctrine, in the Church. In general, in relation to the Word of the Kingdom, because of that which has occurred in the past, a corrupted Christendom presently exists. Those occupying the pulpit are silent on the subject, and those occupying the pew, accordingly, know little to nothing about the subject. And,

should the subject ever emerge – as it sometimes does – those occupying the pulpit are usually quick in their attempts to squelch the message. This message encompasses things which are out of line with the training which they received in the theology schools of the land; and they, accordingly, view the message as erroneous, at best, or at worst, even heresy.

In this respect, the effectiveness of the false teachers at the beginning of the dispensation is evidenced by two things near the end of the dispensation. It is evidenced by 1) the condition of the Church in general and 2) the condition of Christian leadership in particular.

Thus, a completely different situation exists in Christendom during the present day and time than existed during the first few centuries of the dispensation. There would be some need for true apostates, for there are individuals – one here, and one there – who believe the Word of the Kingdom and are bringing forth fruit. But such a need would be minimal.

Thus, with conditions as such, Satan could concentrate his efforts on bringing to completion that which he began almost two millenniums ago. He could concentrate on 1) seeking to maintain the status quo, and 2) seeking to bring about total corruption. And, as is seen in the completion of the parables given outside the house by the seaside - the parable of the leaven - , this is exactly the picture which Scripture elsewhere presents.

Three Measures of Meal

"Three" is the number of *Divine perfection*. This number shows *Divine perfection within that which is in view*. "Three measures of meal" - three measures of ground grain, used to make *bread* - are in view. The reference is to *the Word of God* (Matt. 4:4; Isa. 55:1-2), though not the Word in a general sense. Rather, the reference, contextually, is to *the Word in a specific sense, a specific part of the Word, a specific teaching in the Word*. The subject at hand has to do with *the Word of the Kingdom* (as declared in Matt. 13:19). It has to do with how the message surrounding the coming kingdom of Christ would begin to be proclaimed in Christendom, and how this message would progressively change because of something foreign placed within the message (vs. 19-24, 31, 33).⁷

The reference to leaven placed in the three measures of meal is a reference to taking that which is false and placing it within that which is divinely perfect. It is a reference to a corrupting agent being placed within the divinely perfect God-breathed Word. And, again, it is that part of this divinely perfect revelation having to do with *the Word of the Kingdom* which is primarily in view. Satan simply began placing those proclaiming a false message about the kingdom among those bearing fruit for the kingdom. The false message took root and began to spread, resulting in corruption and deterioration.

And that, contextually, is what continues in view - by Christ using the symbolism of a woman taking leaven and hiding it in three measures of meal. Understanding the parable of the leaven is that simple. This parable has to do with *a progressive, continuing deterioration*. It has to do with a corrupting agent placed within that part of God's divinely perfect revelation referred to as "the Word of the Kingdom." And it has to do with this corrupting agent working "till the whole [the message surrounding the coming kingdom of Christ] *has become corrupted*."

Till the Whole...

The reason for the state in which Christendom presently finds itself is shown by these parables, with the parable of the leaven depicting the end of the matter. This parable shows a progressive deterioration until the point of *total corruption* has been reached. Near the end of the dispensation, when the Word of the Kingdom has been completely corrupted, that which Jesus foretold in this parable will be fulfilled. In those days, at that time, the true message surrounding the coming kingdom of Christ will not be heard throughout the Churches of the land.

The move in Christendom from conditions depicted by the Church in Ephesus to conditions depicted by the Church in Laodicea, seen in Revelation chapters two and three, will then be complete. The Church will not only have left its "first love" (Rev. 2:4), but the Church will be brought into a state described as "*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*" (Rev. 3:17b). And one need only look around today to see this exact state of affairs existing in Christendom - in fundamental and liberal circles alike. *In relation to the Word of the Kingdom*, one segment is just as leavened as the other. *In relation to the Word of the Kingdom*, exactly the same conditions exist in both. Neither proclaims this message, and neither will have anything to do with it.

When Christ was on earth the first time, there were two main religious parties in Israel - the Pharisees and the Sadducees (the fundamentalists and the liberals of that day). These two religious parties were worlds apart in their theology, but they were one in their attitude toward the message surrounding the proffered kingdom. Neither would have anything to do with it. And exactly the same situation exists in Christendom today, immediately preceding Christ's return. There are two main divisions among Christians - the fundamentalists and the liberals. These two religious groups are *worlds apart* in their theology, but they are *one* in their attitude toward the proffered kingdom. Neither will have anything to do with it.

1. From Ephesus...

Revelation chapters two and three record seven short epistles to seven Churches in Asia. These epistles were given in a certain order, beginning with the Church in Ephesus and ending with the Church in Laodicea. And a longer epistle exists elsewhere in the New Testament to one of the seven - The first Church mentioned, the Church in Ephesus. Reference is made in Col. 4:16 to an epistle in connection with the Church in Laodicea. But this is not stated to be an epistle written to that Church (though if it were, it would have to be viewed as a non-canonical epistle which was not preserved and passed down). Rather, it is simply an unidentified epistle (probably one Paul had written from this location); and this epistle, in possession of the Christians in Laodicea, was to be obtained by the Christians in Colosse "from [Gk. *ek*, 'out of,' or 'from']" those in Laodicea.

Paul spent three years ministering to the Christians in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). When he came to Ephesus the first time, he was accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla (whom, it is apparent, he had instructed in "*the faith*"). He remained in Ephesus an unrevealed period of time, reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue. Then he left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus in order to return to Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-21).

It was during Paul's second visit to Ephesus that he spent most of the three-year period which he mentions in Acts 20:31 (Acts 19:10ff). On this second visit, Paul found disciples who were not familiar with the fact that God had called an entirely new entity - *the one new man* "in Christ" - into existence. These disciples knew only "the baptism of John", something which they had apparently learned from Apollos

before he received further instruction in the matter from Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 19:1-7; Acts 18:24-26).

And Paul began his ministry in Ephesus at this time by providing further instruction for these individuals, as Aquila and Priscilla had provided for Apollos. Then Paul continued his ministry in Ephesus by going "from house to house", *teaching the people, keeping nothing back that was profitable for them* (Acts 20:20). In this respect, Paul's ministry in Ephesus would seem to form a pattern concerning the manner in which his entire ministry in the Gentile world was conducted.

Paul had earlier been converted and subsequently taken aside (apparently to a desert area in Arabia) where the Lord appeared to him and personally revealed to him what is called in Scripture "the mystery" (Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:1-11). "The mystery" had to do with the new entity, *the new creation* "in Christ", *the Church*; it had to do with both Jews and Gentiles being joint-heirs together, in one body; and it had to do with those comprising this new entity being the recipients of the kingdom which Israel had rejected - the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 21:33-43; 1 Peter 2:9, 10), *the hope of glory*.

Colossians 1:27-28

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: 28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

This is the message which Paul had been taught by the Lord, and this is the message which he was to carry throughout the Gentile world. This, though, was a message for *Christians*, not a message for the unsaved; and there were very few Christians in the Gentile world when Paul went out with this message. Thus, Paul, in the process of carrying out his ministry, had to proclaim a dual message. Paul, among the unsaved, had to proclaim *the good news surrounding the grace of God*. But, once individuals had been saved, then Paul could proclaim *the good news surrounding the coming glory of Christ*. And the latter, rather than the former, is that which is seen in Scripture forming the heart of Paul's ministry. This is why Scripture presents Paul's ministry - outlined in the latter half of the Book of Acts, and in his epistles - as dealing *far more extensively* with things surrounding "the mystery" than with things surrounding the simple Gospel of the Grace of God.

It is plain from Paul's last meeting with the elders in the Church in Ephesus that "in every city" which he entered (which included Ephesus) he proclaimed "the Gospel of the Grace of God"; but it is also clear that Paul, in these same cities, then went on to proclaim "the kingdom of God" to those who had been saved under the simple preaching of the Gospel of the Grace of God (Acts 20:24-25). And the three years Paul spent in Ephesus are specifically said to be time which he spent *instructing Christians in the faith* and *warning them about false teachers who would arise in their midst* (Acts 20:28-32).

Then, the epistle which he later wrote to those in Ephesus, shows *the depth* to which he had previously instructed the Christians in that city. This epistle begins (apart from foundational teachings, and really, apart from any introductory teachings) with a discussion of the things which would be realized "in the dispensation of the fullness of times" - adoption, redemption, and an inheritance (1:3-14). And this epistle begins and continues with the assumption that the Christians in Ephesus were well-grounded in *the faith*.

Paul could begin and continue this way because of the spiritual maturity of these Christians - a result of his previous lengthy ministry in their midst. And Paul's unceasing prayer for these Christians at the time

he wrote this epistle was that God would give them *wisdom* and *full knowledge* (Gk. *epignosis*) concerning the things he was writing about (things which he had previously taught them), referred to as "the hope of his calling", and "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (1:16-18).

Then Paul continues in chapter two, showing the reason for their salvation - the reason these Christians in Ephesus had passed "from death unto life" (vs. 1-10). And the thought of saved Jews and Gentiles, seen together in one body in this chapter (vs. 15-16), merges into a discussion of "the mystery" in chapter three (vs. 1-11). And Paul, calling attention to "the mystery", continues with the thought of *an inheritance* set before Christians, because a future inheritance is what the mystery has to do with. It has to do with Gentiles being "fellowheirs" with Jews, "of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (v. 6). And Paul refers to the whole of the message surrounding the mystery as "the unsearchable riches of Christ", and "the manifold wisdom of God" (vs. 8, 10) - something which the writer of Hebrews referred to as "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3), or which Peter referred to as "exceeding great and precious promises".

In the first part of chapter four, Paul dealt with the reason for gifted leaders and teachers in the Church in Ephesus, and elsewhere - to guide Christians as they moved from immaturity to maturity. And this was with a view to the future adoption, redemption, and inheritance (Eph. 4:11-14, 30). Then the Christian walk comes into view as individuals move from immaturity to maturity. And this, with a warning at the end to clothe oneself with "the whole armour of God" because of the ongoing spiritual warfare with Satan and his angels, takes up the remainder of the epistle.

The Church in Ephesus was filled with Christians who were well-versed in the Word of the Kingdom. And well they should have been, for Paul had spent a great deal of time with them, going "from house to house", teaching them - something which allowed him to be able to later write a letter to these Christians and simply begin discussing "the deep things of God" (1Cor. 2:10), completely apart from introductory, foundational teachings. And it was this Church which the Lord chose to use in His revelation to John in order to show the state of Christendom at the beginning. This was a time when the true message surrounding the coming kingdom of Christ was proclaimed throughout Christendom, and this message was received and understood by Christians throughout the Churches (Col. 1:5, 6, 23).

During these early years, this was *the message of the hour* when Christians met. This was the central message proclaimed by Paul and other ministers of that day, this was the central message of all the letters (epistles) written to the different Churches and individuals during that time. And Christians during these days gathered to talk about the things having to do with the coming kingdom of Christ and encourage and exhort one another relative to *the hope* set before them (Heb. 10:23-25). *But then something happened!* A foreign substance was placed in the three measures of meal. And it wasn't long before things began to go awry, even in the Church in Ephesus. Note that which Scripture states about the Church in Ephesus, in this respect, as recorded in Revelation:

Revelation 2:2-4

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

The corruption which Satan introduced began and continued to cause deterioration in Christendom. It began in the manner depicted in the first of the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three - the Church in Ephesus; and it would continue until it had brought about conditions in Christendom as depicted in the last of the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three - the Church in Laodicea.

2. To Laodicea

From a Biblical standpoint, one thing about Christendom is certain, and this one thing cannot be denied!

Christendom, near the end of the dispensation, is going to appear in the world in *a completely leavened state*. This is something which Christ revealed to His disciples before the Church was ever brought into existence, and this is something which He revealed again to John alone about sixty years after the Church had been brought into existence.

The record of Church history was given before the dispensation began, and the record of Church history was given once again during the early years of the dispensation. And man today - looking back from the perspective of the closing years of the dispensation and viewing both the history and current state of Christendom - can think, say, or write what he wants. *But one unchangeable fact remains*. According to the clear teaching of the Word of God, near the end of the dispensation, *all Christendom will have become completely saturated with leaven, with that which is false*. Near the end of the dispensation, *all Christendom will have become completely corrupted*.

It is not a pretty picture. Corruption never is. This, though, is what the unchangeable Word of God has to say about the final state of Christendom during Man's Day. And, for those believing what the Word of God has to say on the subject, this should be the end of the matter. It's not something open to discussion or debate. This is a settled matter, clearly revealed by Christ at two different times and recorded in the Word for all to see.

In the second of these two times - in Revelation chapters two and three - the Lord revealed this final state of Christendom through referring to conditions in the Church in Laodicea, a Church which had become completely corrupted even before the end of the first century. And, if one desires to study about the Church of today (whether fundamental or liberal), he need only turn to Rev. 3:14-21. This is a description given by Christ Himself; and this description is the only completely accurate description in existence of the Church at the end of the dispensation.

But, again, bear one thing in mind. This does not only picture Christendom at the end of the dispensation in a general sense. Rather, something *specific* is also in view. This presents Christendom at the end of the dispensation in relation to *a particular outlook on Scripture* - the attitude of Christians throughout the Churches toward the Word of the Kingdom, that upon which the leaven is seen centering its attack.

The Lord warned the Ephesians that they had *"left their first love"*. What exactly is this "first love"? I have heard various explanations on the subject, but I believe it is the below described attitude of Christians toward the Word of the Kingdom - we are to "love His appearing", and everything surrounding it.

2 Timothy 4:8

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Titus 2:12-13

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

It is this "love of His appearing" that causes us to purify ourselves, and thus qualifies us to participate in this coming glorious kingdom:

1 John 3:2-3

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Peter expresses this "love of His appearing" and the surrounding doctrines of the Word of the Kingdom in his first epistle:

1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end (goal) of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

And this whole overall thought of the leaven centering its attack at this point of the "first love" is something easily seen throughout the seven epistles to the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three. Note that each epistle is structured exactly the same. Each centers on *works*, with a view to *overcoming*. The statement to each Church is twofold in each epistle: 1) "I know thy works...", and 2) "To him that overcometh..." (2:2, 7, 9, 11, 13, 17, 19, 26; 3:1, 5, 8, 12, 15, 21). These are the two inseparable and interrelated things around which the Word of the Kingdom centers - *works, with a view to overcoming*. And all of the promises to the overcomers project matters out into *the Messianic Era*.

And when the Lord called attention to the Laodicean Church as being "*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*" (v. 17b), He was presenting a picture of the Church at the end of the dispensation in relation to that which was in view - *works, with a view to overcoming*. And the counsel that the Lord gave the Church in this condition was quite clear:

Revelation 3:18

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Thus, the Church near the end of the dispensation, in relation to teachings surrounding the Word of the Kingdom, will be in the condition depicted by the Laodicean Church. It will be completely corrupted. And all one needs to do to see the truth of the matter is go into practically any Church throughout the country today - fundamental or liberal, it makes no difference - and listen for any reference or teaching surrounding the Word of the Kingdom. One will listen in vain, for the message is simply not being taught. The leaven has done its damaging work too well.

If Any Man...

So, what is the Christian today who understands the Word of the Kingdom to do in surroundings of this nature? He finds himself in the midst of Christians who know little to nothing about, reject, or make light of the Word of the Kingdom. And he can't really leave and go elsewhere, for the leaven, working for almost two millennia, has brought the whole of Christendom into this same state.

The answer concerning that which he is to do is given at the end of the short epistle to the Church in Laodicea. The Lord knew exactly how conditions would be at the end of the leavening process. And, with this in view, those in the Laodicean Church were exhorted to follow a particular course of action within this Church. Note Christ's closing words to these Christians:

Revelation 3:19-21

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh...

In relation to the central message which Christians are to hear throughout the dispensation, Christ, at the end of the dispensation, is pictured *outside the Church, knocking, seeking admission to those inside*. And the invitation which Christ extends at this time is to *individual* Christians rather than to the Church as a whole, for the Church will have been permeated through and through with a leavening substance which can only continue its deteriorating work. The invitation, seen in this passage, extends *to any individual* in the Church: "If *any man* hear my voice, and open the door..." The person is not told to leave the Church. Rather, the person is to remain where he is and heed the Lord's message. Then, the Lord will come *inside the Church, to that individual, with fellowship in the Word following*. There will be fellowship between Christ and that individual ("and will sup with him"), and there will be fellowship between that individual and Christ ("...and he with me" [v. 20b]; 1 John 1:3). But for the other Christians in the Church, Christ will remain *outside the door, though the invitation will remain open*.

And that is the way it is in Christendom as the Church nears the end of the dispensation, near the end of the 2,000 years which God has allotted for the Spirit to procure a bride for His Son (Gen. 24). The Church finds itself in a completely leavened state, with *Christ outside the door, exhorting individual Christians to heed the truth of that which Satan has fought so hard to destroy*.

THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

Matthew 13:44

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

The last three parables in Matthew chapter thirteen, unlike the first four, were given only after Christ had *re-entered the house*. The first four were given *outside the house, by the seaside*; and the last three were given *back inside the house* (vs. 1-3, 36). Christ re-entered the house prior to giving these last three parables in order to emphasize that an entirely different situation existed from this point forward in the course of that which He was covering in these parables.

The first four parables cover the entirety of the present dispensation, with particular emphasis upon matters relating to the proclamation of the *Word of the Kingdom* among Christians. The dispensation, especially insofar as the proclamation of this message is concerned, will end, according to these parables, in *a completely leavened state* (v. 33). Because of the working of the leaven during the course of the dispensation, producing a continuing deterioration throughout Christendom, conditions at the end of the dispensation will be as depicted by the Church in Laodicea in Rev. 3:14-21.

In relation to the proclamation of and adherence to the Word of the Kingdom at the end of the dispensation, the Church is described in Rev. 3:17 as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." This is simply a description of conditions which Christ had called attention to some sixty years prior to the time John wrote the Book of Revelation: "...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith [the faith'] on the earth?" (Luke 18:8b). And the manner in which the question is worded in the Greek text designates a negative answer. The Son of Man *will not* find "the faith" being taught throughout the Churches of the land at the time of His return.

The Word of the Kingdom, taught universally throughout the first century Church at the beginning of the dispensation, will be completely absent in teachings throughout the Church at the end of the dispensation. Instead, in some quarters, that more closely aligned with the "doctrines of demons" will be taught (1Tim. 4:1-3). The working of the leaven throughout the dispensation will have gradually wrought this change. Thus, the first four parables carry an individual through the whole of the present dispensation in the preceding respect.

Three Parables for Three Groups: The Jews, the Church, and the Gentiles

Remember the "Keys of Three" we discussed earlier?

The remaining three parables deal with the final outcome of the three groups comprising all mankind: 1) the Jews, 2) the Church, and 3) the Gentiles. These parables have to do with *a continued sequence of events pertaining to the Word of the Kingdom*. They simply continue the sequence of events from the preceding four parables, with a view to the Messianic Era. Christ made this important distinction of three separate groups again in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 24-25), where He foretold endtime events to occur for these same three groups, and in this same order: Jews, Church, and Gentiles (this will be discussed in a later chapter). **UNLESS YOU CAN SEE THIS DISTINCTION, THE TRUE MEANING OF THESE THREE PARABLES IS DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN.**

The Treasure, The Field

The first parable which Christ gave after He had re-entered the house had to do with a treasure which a Man found and hid in a field. And following this, the Man went out, sold all that He had, and bought the field where He had hidden the treasure. This parable reaches back into past events in order to establish a framework and foundational basis for dealing with future events - the central issue of the parable, *the purchase of the field* where the treasure was hidden. *The things leading into the purchase of the field* have to do with past events, occurring at Christ's first coming; but *the purchase of the field itself* has to do with events yet future, events which will occur immediately prior to Christ's return. These yet future events are pictured in the Book of Revelation under the seven-sealed scroll.

THE FIRST FOUR PARABLES DEPICT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH UP UNTIL THE ENDTIMES. THE NEXT THREE PARABLES GIVE A FORECAST OF WHAT WILL FINALLY OCCUR IN THE ENDTIMES CONCERNING THESE THREE DISTINCT GROUPS: JEW, CHURCH, AND GENTILE.

The purchase of the field is that which follows the progressive continuity of the first four parables in relation to time. All of that stated concerning the events preceding the parable forms background material so one can properly understand and place this purchase within its correct Biblical framework. In the progression of that revealed in the seven connected parables in Matthew chapter thirteen, the "field" is specifically stated to be the *world* (v. 38); and, through comparing Scripture elsewhere, the "treasure" can only be identified as *Israel* (Exo. 19:5, 6; Psalms 135:4).

Exodus 19:5

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

Psalms 135:4

For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.

When Christ came the first time, He came only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel", offering to the people comprising this nation *the kingdom of the heavens* (Matt. 4:17-25; 10:5, 6; 15:24). However, Israel spurned the offer, and the kingdom of the heavens was taken from Israel. Then Israel was set aside, with a view to an entirely new entity (*the one new man* "in Christ") being called into existence, to be the recipient of that which had previously been offered to, rejected by, and taken from Israel (Matt. 21:33-43; 1 Peter 2:9, 10).

The Man finding the treasure, hiding the treasure, and selling all that He had can only be a reference to three events occurring in the past:

- 1) *Christ's ministry to Israel at His first coming,*
- 2) *Israel being set aside, and*
- 3) *Christ's finished work at Calvary.*

But note that Christ, following His finished work at Calvary, did not purchase the treasure (Israel). Rather, He is seen purchasing *the field* where the treasure was hidden. That is, He is seen purchasing *the world*. And this purchase cannot be a reference to the purchase of salvation for all those in the world through Christ's finished work at Calvary, as commonly taught. Christ selling all that He had is not

synonymous with His purchase of the field. Such a teaching would make the parable deal centrally with salvation by grace through faith, *something which none of these parables deals with directly*.

Salvation by grace through faith is certainly necessary before matters concerning the Kingdom of Heaven come into view, but the primary subject in these parables is *the kingdom of the heavens* - a subject stated in each of the seven parables, leaving no room for anyone to ever misunderstand the primary subject matter of these parables. Thus, an erroneous view of Christ's purchase of the field of this nature - making this purchase synonymous with His finished work at Calvary - not only completely removes the parable from its contextual setting but also from the clearly stated subject of the parable.

Comparing Scripture with Scripture, things involved in the purchase of the field in this parable becomes clear. This present earth, along with its inhabitants, will form *the inheritance* to be possessed by Christ and His bride during the coming age (Psa. 2:6-9; Rom. 8:17-23; Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21). And this is what must be *purchased* (redeemed) prior to a new order of Sons being brought forth to rule from the heavens over the earth (Rom. 8:18-21; Heb. 2:5, 10). The purchase of the field in the parable of the treasure has to do with *a redeemed inheritance - the redemption of the earth*. This is a future work of Christ, made possible because of His past and completed work at Calvary, that will be accomplished at the time of His second coming. Calling attention to Israel, the world, and Christ's finished work at Calvary was necessary prior to any mention of the redemption of the inheritance. All these things set the stage for and lead into Christ's statement concerning His future work in this respect.

With this somewhat lengthy introduction, let us take up the parable in detail. "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field.*" If scripture is allowed to interpret scripture there will be no difficulty whatever in discovering what this "hid treasure" actually and definitely signifies. Go back to Exodus:

Exodus 19:5

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

This corresponds to "the field" in which the "treasure" is found. The Hebrew in this verse is the same as in Exodus 19:5.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9

When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. 9 For the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

Again, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance (that means their earthly portion) - when He separated the sons of Adam - He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance": that is, *here*, on earth, for the context is speaking solely about earthly things - the apportioning of the earth to the nations. Once more:

Psalms 135:4

For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.

These passages have no reference at all to the saints of this present dispensation, or to the church which is the body of Christ, but speak of the earthly Israel according to the flesh. *They* are God's treasure on earth, His earthly elect people. Confirmation of *this* definition of the "treasure" in our parable, is found in the fact that never once in the twenty-one Epistles in the New Testament is the word "treasure" used of the Church. It is never applied to the saints of this present dispensation.

Now the first thing we are told in Matthew 13:44 about this treasure is that it was hid in a field, and the field was "the world" (see v. 38). This is precisely the condition in which God's *earthly* elect people were found at the beginning of His dealings with them. The parable starts with the treasure hid in the field, and the Old Testament begins with *Israel* hidden in the field. Who was the father of Israel according to the flesh? Abraham. Go back to the starting-point in Abraham's life. Where was he when God's hand was first laid upon him? Was he living in separation from the idolatrous people around him? No, he was hidden away among them - one of them! Take a later point in their early history. After Abraham came Isaac, and after Isaac Jacob, for Esau was not in the elect line. Look at Jacob, away from the promised land, an exile in Padan-aram, working for an unprincipled godless Gentile - for that is virtually what he was. Look at Jacob there among all the servants of Laban, *hidden* - nothing to indicate that he was one of the high favorites of God.

Proceed a little further. Abraham's and Jacob's descendants have become a numerous progeny, until they number some two million souls. Where are they to be found? Working in the brick-kilns of Egypt, a company of slaves. What was there to distinguish them? What was there to denote that they were God's peculiar treasure? Nothing, indeed: the treasure was "hidden." That is where the parable begins, and that is where their history as a nation began - buried, as it were, amid the rubbish of Egypt. That is why we read:

Deuteronomy 26:1, 5

And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; 2 That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there....5 And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father,...

Yes, the treasure was hidden in the field at the beginning. From Isaiah 51:1,2, we learn how, at a later point in the history of Israel, God reminded them of their lowly origin, of the humble start that they had as a people:

Isaiah 51:1-2

Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. 2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

One other passage on this point:

Deuteronomy 32:10

He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

Here is their lowly origin mentioned again: the treasure was "*hid*," buried in the field. Coming back to our text let us turn to the second detail in it: "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man has found.*" That is the next point, the finding of the treasure. That is so very simple it needs no interpretation. The "man" here is Christ Himself - as the "man" is Christ in verse 24, see verse 37; and in the parable that follows, verse 45. The "finding" of the "treasure" by Christ refers to the days of His earthly ministry. We are told in John 1:11, "He came unto His own;" that does not mean His own spiritually, for we read that "His own received Him not." It was His own people according to the flesh. As He said to the Canaanitish woman in Matthew 15:24, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Christ, the Man, came to Israel, the Jews. His ministry was confined unto them. The "treasure" was "found" - it was no longer hidden when Christ came here. The Jewish nation was not as it was in the days of Moses in Egypt. The sons of Jacob were in their own land. They had their own temple; the priesthood was still intact. And it was to them, this Man, Christ, came.

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man has found, he hides." There is a distinct step in each clause. He "hides" it. That is the most solemn word in the chapter, with the one exception of the furnace of fire. Remember what was before us in the 12th of Matthew, which furnishes the key to the 13th. In Matthew 12 Christ presented Himself to the Jews and the Jews rejected Him, and because of their rejection He rejected them, pronounced sentence of doom upon them - the evil spirit coming back and taking with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, "*Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*" Then at the close of the chapter Christ intimated He would no longer acknowledge any bond or tie, any kinship except a spiritual one - "*Whosoever shall do the will of My Father*": it was Christ severing the link which, according to the flesh, bound Him to Israel.

So here in the parable: first we have the treasure hid in the field: that was Israel's condition at the beginning of their national history in Old Testament times. Second, we have the Man coming to the treasure: that was the earthly ministry of Christ. Third, we have the treasure hid once more: that was Christ's rejection of Israel. The "hiding" of the treasure referred to the last dispersion and scattering of the Jews throughout the whole earth.

One more passage of Scripture in proof of what we have said above on Christ's "*hiding*" Israel:

Deuteronomy 32:28-29

For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. 29 O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

How often is a sermon preached on this as though it applied to every man on earth, and his "latter end" is made to mean his deathbed! But the "latter end" here is of the nation of Israel, and it is the latter end of their history *on this earth*. Now read the next verse:

Deuteronomy 32:30

How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?

Yes, they "sold" Him for thirty pieces of silver. But "*whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap,*" and God delivered them into the hands of the Gentiles. Their Rock "sold" them, and "the Lord shut them up."

That is parallel with the treasure "hidden" again. They *are* "shut up." When a thing is shut up you cannot see it, it is hidden from sight.

Consider now the fourth point in our text: which is the most puzzling detail in the parable. Look at it closely: *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field."* The purchase is made *after* the treasure had been "hidden," and, as we have seen, the hiding of the treasure had respect to Christ's judgment upon Israel and His dispersion of them throughout the earth.

John 11:51-52

And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

What did he prophesy? *"That Jesus should die for"* - for whom? - *"for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that He also should gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad."* Now what could be plainer than that? We have two distinct objects there, two distinct companies - "that nation" and also the gathering together in one of "the children of God" that are scattered abroad. The gathering together in one of the children of God that are scattered abroad is what God is doing in this present dispensation, taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name, and gathering them together into one Body. That is what we have in the sixth parable - one pearl. But before that, we are told here in John 11:51, He also died for "that nation." This is what you have in the fifth parable, the earthly people, hid in the field, the world, the earth. This is God's *earthly* elect, "that nation." In the sixth parable, the pearl, you have His *heavenly* elect people, the one body. But we are told in the parable that "for joy thereof He goes and sells all that He has and *buys* that field."

Turn to 2 Peter 2:1:

2 Peter 2:1

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

These false teachers are reprobates, yet this very verse says the Lord *bought* them. Many have created their own difficulty there in failing to distinguish between ransoming and redeeming. The Lord has "bought" the world, but He has *not* "redeemed" the world. There is a big difference between the two things. The first Adam was placed at the head of the world: God said *"Have thou dominion over all"*: and he lost it, he forfeited it; the Devil wrested it from his hands: and the last Adam, *as man*—"the second Man from heaven" - needed to purchase that which Adam had lost; therefore He bought *the field*.

He has bought the whole world, but He has not redeemed it. Particular redemption is for God's elect only, but ransoming, purchasing, is much wider. He bought the field - "Denying the Lord that *bought* them" - you cannot get away from it. Now, then, He bought the field also because of the treasure that was hidden in it. The treasure in the field is Israel. The man in the parable is Christ. He went and sold all that He had. He who was rich became poor, and bought the field. Now that is mentioned *after* the re-hiding of the treasure in the field for this reason: the Jews do not enter into the value and the benefits of Christ's atonement until after this age is over. It is not until the Millennium that Israel will enjoy the benefits of

that purchase of His. He bought the field because of the treasure that was in it, and that is why the purchasing of the field is mentioned after the re-hiding of the treasure in it.

To summarize. First, we have the treasure hid in the field: that takes us back to the beginning of Israel's history as a nation. Second, we have the Man finding that treasure; that is Christ coming to this earth and confining His message to the Jews in Palestine. Third, we have the Man hiding the treasure; that is Christ's judgment upon Israel because of their rejection of Him referring to their dispersion abroad throughout the earth. Fourth, we have the Man purchasing the treasure and the whole field in which it was found, referring to the death of Christ. When Christ comes the second time, He will redeem the earth, in which is found His peculiar treasure, the nation of Israel. Then the nation of Israel will be restored to their earthly inheritance promised by God in His covenants. They will participate in ruling the earth upon the earth, while the Church of the Firstborn will be ruling in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thus, we see the conclusion of the matter as to how God will deal with the Jews in the endtimes.

THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Matthew 13:45-46

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

There are two equally valid interpretations of this parable – one primary, and the other secondary, and in no way are these two interpretations in conflict with each other.

The Primary Interpretation

The parable of the pearl continues the thought of *redemption* from the previous parable (the parable of the treasure). The "Man" in both parables is *the Lord Jesus Christ*, and this Man selling all that He had in both parables is also the same, pointing to *Christ's past, finished work at Calvary*. But *the purchase* which the Man made - something different in each parable - is separated in time from His work at Calvary. The purchase in each parable, seen as a redemptive act in each, *follows* His work at Calvary. That is, neither *the purchase of the field* in the previous parable nor *the purchase of the pearl* in the present parable is synonymous with or occurred at the same time as His finished work at Calvary.

Thus, in the chronological sequence of events in these two parables, Christ's purchase of both the field and the pearl is seen occurring *following* His selling all that He had, *i.e., following* the events surrounding Calvary. And, within the chronological framework of all seven parables, this dual purchase is seen occurring at a time *following* the present dispensation. In this respect, two millennia lie between Christ's finished work at Calvary and the purchase seen in both of these parables. Christ's finished work at Calvary has to do with man's eternal salvation, and there is no present or future work of Christ in this realm. *Everything is past.*

Christ, *following His finished work*, "sat down on the right hand of God." And, with respect to *this finished work*, Scripture states, "*For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified*" (Heb. 10:12-14). There was no chair in any part of the earthly tabernacle, for the sacrificial work of the Old Testament priests was never finished (Heb. 10:11). They could not sit down. But Christ, *relative to His sacrificial work*, could sit down in the heavens, indicating that this work was *finished*. "*...there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*" (Heb. 10:26).

However, the blood of that sacrifice, presently on the mercy seat of the heavenly sanctuary, is another matter. There is a present work of the Son in connection with His blood having been placed on the mercy seat. But this work is on behalf of those who have already been saved, on the basis of His past, sacrificial work at Calvary. The present work of the Son is that of High Priest (Heb. 9:11, 12; 10:19ff). He is presently providing a cleansing for Christians who sin, on the basis of His Own blood on the mercy seat in the heavenly sanctuary (1 John 1:7-2:2). And this cleansing has nothing to do with one's eternal salvation. It is a cleansing provided for those who are already saved, with a view to the One doing the cleansing bringing "many sons unto glory" at a future time (Heb. 2:10.)

We see a picture of this in the Old Testament – the priest was consecrated and washed all over (Exo. 29:4) when he became of age (30 years – Num.4:3); thereafter, he needed only to wash his hands and feet in the laver before going to the brazen altar (Exo. 30:19).

Jesus emphasized His future ministry as High Priest when He was washing the disciples' feet:

John 13:10

Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

There is, though, of necessity, *a present work* being carried on within the Godhead pertaining to man's eternal salvation. But this is *not a work* being carried on by the Son after any fashion. This is a work performed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit breathes life into the one who has no life (present), based on the finished work of the Son (past). And through this complete work - *the past work* of the Son, and *the present work* of the Spirit - man, "dead in trespasses and sins", *passes* "from death unto life" (Gen. 1:2; 2:7; Ezek. 37:1-10; John 5:24; Eph. 2:1).

The last words of Christ prior to His death at Calvary were, "It is finished [*lit.*, 'It has been finished']" (John 19:30). Christ used a perfect tense of the Greek verb *teleo* (*tetelestai*), which means to bring something "to an end", or "to a completion." And the perfect tense points to action completed in past time, with the results of that action existing during present time *in a finished state*. Everything necessary to affect man's eternal salvation had been finished at that point, and Christ used this one Greek verb (*teleo*) in a perfect tense (*tetelestai*) to call attention to this fact. Then He simply "gave up the spirit [*lit.*, He 'breathed out']" (Luke 23:46), for there was no need for Him to continue the sufferings which He was undergoing. *Everything had been completed*, allowing the Spirit to now breathe life into the one having no life (man dead in trespasses and sins) on the basis of the Son's finished work.

But the two purchases seen in the parables of the treasure and the pearl in Matt. 13:44-46 point to a work of the Son beyond His work on Calvary. Thus, this latter work (a work actually subsequent to His work in the heavenly sanctuary) can have nothing to do with one's eternal salvation, for that is based on *the Son's finished work*. Rather, this latter work (as His present work in the heavenly sanctuary) has to do with *the purpose* for one's salvation, *the reason one has been saved.*

(In the preceding respect, there is *a past, finished work* of the Son at Calvary; and, because of this past, finished work, the Son can perform *a present work* in the heavenly sanctuary; and, because of both His past and present works, there can be *a future work* with respect to that seen in the symbolism of the purchase of both the field and the pearl in Matt. 13:44-46.)

In the first of these two parables, in verse forty-four, the treasure points to Israel. *Israel* is God's "peculiar treasure" (Exo. 19:5, 6; Psa. 135:4). Then, in the second of these two parables, in verses 45-46, *the Church* comes into view.

Pearls are found in oysters, which come from the sea. And the oyster, a species found in the water which lacks fins and scales, would be unclean to the orthodox Jew (Lev. 11:9-12). Considering this fact, as well as the fact that the oyster bearing the pearl is found in the sea (depicting the Gentiles), the pearl could not be another reference to Israel (continuing, in this respect, from the parable of the treasure). Rather, the pearl would have to refer to another entity within God's dealings with man. The identity of the pearl, unlike the identity of the treasure in the previous parable, is not really given in so many words per se anywhere in Scripture. But, nevertheless, the intended symbolism through the use of the pearl can easily be determined. Through comparing Scripture with Scripture, the "pearl" can easily be seen as a reference to *the Church* (more specifically, *the Bride*).

Christ gave these parables after He had gone back inside the house, and the treasure (Israel) comes into view because God will be dealing with Israel during this time, completing His dealings with the nation during Daniel's Seventieth Week. But Christ is not seen purchasing the treasure in the first of these two parables, as He is seen purchasing the pearl in the second. Rather, in the first parable, He is seen purchasing *the field* where the treasure was hidden. Thus, Christ purchases *the field* in the first of these two parables; then He purchases *the pearl* in the second. And the fact that these parables are about the kingdom of the heavens - necessitating Christians (the present recipients of the offer of the kingdom) being in view in relation to the redemption of the forfeited inheritance - will alone reveal that the pearl has to be identified with the Church. All of this will become evident during the course of this study.

The parable of the treasure shows one facet of the purpose for man's salvation, and the parable of the pearl shows the other. The purchase of the field (the world) seen in the parable of the treasure has to do with *Christ's future work of redeeming the forfeited inheritance* (seen in Rev. 6-18); and the purchase of the pearl is a reference to the bride (saved through His finished work at Calvary and revealed through decisions and determinations at the Judgment Seat [Rev. 1-4]) *becoming His wife* (seen in Rev. 19). And all this occurs on the basis of Christ being found worthy to purchase the field and the pearl in Revelation chapter five - found worthy solely on the basis of His finished work as "the Lamb" (Rev. 5:6ff).

These two parables, along with most of the Book of Revelation, draw from a somewhat simple type in the Old Testament - a type set forth in the fourth chapter of the Book of Ruth. In this fourth chapter of Ruth, *Boaz is seen redeeming a forfeited inheritance, with Ruth becoming his wife through this redemptive act*. And this chapter relates the complete story of events seen relative to the purchases in the parables of the treasure and the pearl, along with that seen in Revelation chapters five through nineteen. None of these things in Matthew's gospel or in the Book of Revelation can be properly understood apart from understanding this one type in the Old Testament. God provided the numerous types seen throughout the Old Testament for a reason - *to help explain the antitypes*. And these types are important beyond degree, for they will, numerous times, open up and cast a flood of light on the various antitypes. And this particular type in the Book of Ruth is one case in point, which can only become increasingly evident to anyone who begins to mine the treasures contained therein.

The Type - The Antitype

Events in the fourth chapter of the Book of Ruth, where Boaz's redemptive act is seen, must be understood within context. These events occurred *after* Ruth had become a member of the family (ch. 1),

after Ruth had gleaned in Boaz's field and beat out that which she had gleaned throughout the time of harvest (ch. 2), *after* Ruth had prepared herself for meeting Boaz (ch. 3a), and *after* Ruth had met Boaz on his threshing floor at midnight (ch. 3b).

And moving these things over into the antitype, Christ's redemptive act, seen in this fourth chapter of Ruth (typified by Boaz's redemptive act), will occur at exactly the same time. It will occur *after* individuals have become members of the family (have become Christians), *after* those in the family have gleaned in the field (the world) and beat out that which they have gleaned throughout the time of harvest, *after* those in the family have prepared themselves for meeting Christ, and *after* they have met Christ on His threshing floor at midnight (met Christ at His Judgment Seat, at the termination of the present dispensation). (The "threshing floor" and "midnight" both refer to *judgment* - one to *place*, and the other to *time*.)

Thus, Christ's finished work at Calvary is not dealt with per se in the fourth chapter of Ruth. Rather, this work is simply inferred or assumed, for Boaz in the type was able to redeem, and Christ in the antitype will be able to redeem. This matter surrounding Christ's finished work at Calvary was dealt with back in chapter one where Ruth and Orpah found themselves members of the family *through death*. The death of their husbands had dissolved the marriage relationship itself, and they were then members of the family only *through death, the death of others*.

And Christians are members of the family through exactly the same means - *through death, the death of Another*. It was Christ Who had died for their sins (1Cor. 15:3; 1 Thess. 5:10), and the only way they could become members of the family was through *the death of Another*. Thus, the message surrounding that which occurred at Calvary is seen in chapter one of the Book of Ruth, not in chapter four. The redemptive act seen in chapter four - type or antitype - is a subsequent work on behalf of those who are already members of the family (though *not a work for all family members*). Ruth alone is seen in Boaz's redemptive act. Orpah, also a member of the family through death, had turned back [Luke 9:62; 17:32]). And this redemptive work is seen occurring *after* the dispensation has run its course (chs. 2, 3), not *before* the dispensation begins (ch. 1).

1. The Nearer Kinsman

Different kinds of legal matters within the Jewish economy at the time events in the Book of Ruth occurred were carried on at the gates of the various cities scattered throughout the land, at the entrance way into these cities. Elders of a particular city would gather at the gate of that city and await anyone in the city who might have a legal matter to carry out or to resolve. This is the reason chapter four begins with the statement, "Then went Boaz up to the gate..." (4:1). And this is the apparent reason that Lot was seen seated in the gate of Sodom when the two angels entered Sodom in Gen. 19:1. Lot was apparently among those at the gate (among the elders of the city) who were there to carry out or to resolve legal matters on behalf of those in the city.

Boaz, at the gate, first stopped a nearer kinsman who had come by, and he instructed the nearer kinsman to sit in a certain place (v. 1). Boaz then singled out ten elders who were at the gate, took them aside, and instructed them to sit in the same proximity as the nearer kinsman (v. 2). Boaz then explained the matter at hand, directing his remarks to the nearer kinsman, but making sure that the ten elders heard as well. He needed all of them to hear that which he had to say, for they all had to act - the nearer kinsman first, then the ten elders.

The subject surrounded an inheritance belonging to Naomi, which had been forfeited. Boaz wanted to pay the required price and redeem the inheritance, but there was a nearer kinsman who had first choice to act in this capacity. And the nearer kinsman, after hearing about the forfeited inheritance as Boaz explained the matter, said that he would redeem the inheritance (vs. 3, 4).

However, Boaz wasn't through explaining all that was involved. Boaz then said, "*What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance*" (v. 5). The one who redeemed the inheritance, whether the nearer kinsman or Boaz, would also, at the same time, be redeeming (purchasing) Ruth; and Ruth, through this redemptive process, would become his wife. This was something which would automatically occur within the process of redeeming the forfeited inheritance, redeeming the field. Ruth, through this redemptive process, was also being redeemed (purchased), and would automatically become the wife of the one performing this redemptive act.

Much controversy has surrounded the identity (with respect to the antitype) of the nearer kinsman. However, there should be no controversy, for the nearer kinsman was *able to redeem*. And the only One *able to redeem* in the antitype is the One Who shed His blood at Calvary (Rev. 5:1ff). And though it was the Son Who shed His blood and died at Calvary, this was, as well, *the blood of God* (Acts 20:28). Thus, just as there are two (*only two* [v. 4b]) who were able to redeem in the type, there must also be Two (*only Two*) Who are able to redeem in the antitype. And these Two in the antitype are the Father and His Son, though the Father has placed all redemptive work in the hands of His Son.

This will explain why the nearer kinsman couldn't redeem the inheritance and take Ruth as his wife. The nearer kinsman already had a wife, something seen in the antitype. God already has a wife - Israel is the wife of God. Thus, whether in the type (past) or in the antitype (future), the Nearer Kinsman wasn't free/won't be free to perform the redemptive act. Such an act would have "marred ['destroyed,' 'ruined']" (type), would "mar ['destroy,' 'ruin']" (antitype), the Nearer Kinsman's own inheritance.

2. Boaz's Work

There was a law in Israel concerning the nearest kinsman either refusing or forfeiting his right to redeem an inheritance. And a central feature of this law had to do with the nearest kinsman relinquishing His right through removing his shoe and handing it to the kinsman next in line to redeem (Deut. 25:7-9; Ruth 4:7, 8). Thus, in keeping with this law, when the nearer kinsman couldn't redeem Naomi's inheritance (though through no fault of his own), he removed his shoe and handed it to Boaz. This act showed to everyone present (in this case, Boaz and the ten elders) that he had relinquished his redemptive rights to the kinsman next in line, to Boaz. Thus, once this had been done, Boaz was free to redeem the forfeited inheritance. And the ten elders were also free to recognize Boaz as the one now able to act in this capacity, along with recognizing the price which he was to pay as legal and binding.

And, not only was this the case, but once the complete transaction had been carried out, it would also be recognized that Ruth was Boaz's wife. Ruth automatically became Boaz's wife through this legal transaction carried out at the gate of the city, witnessed by ten elders, among others present.

Ruth 4:9-10

And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my

wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.

This was followed by all those who were present recognizing that which had occurred, along with their pronouncing a blessing on the union which had resulted from this transaction - that of Boaz and Ruth. And the remainder of the chapter, bringing the account to a close, records the genealogy of Boaz through this union (vs. 11ff). "...*Boaz begat Obed, And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David*" (vs. 21b, 22). Boaz and Ruth's great grandson was King David. And David, in his reign over Israel, typifies Christ in His coming reign over the earth as the greater Son of David (2 Sam. 7:12-14; Matt. 21:9, 15; Luke 1:27, 31-33).

And, as David reigned over Israel in Saul's stead, following a time of rejection, Christ will reign over the earth in Satan's stead, following a time of rejection. And, just as those who were faithful to David during his time of rejection were elevated to positions of power with David when he ascended the throne, so will it be when Christ ascends the throne. Christ will elevate those faithful to Him during His time of rejection to positions of power with Him when He ascends the throne.

Everything about Ruth chapter four is Messianic within its scope of fulfillment. This chapter deals with the redemption of a piece of land, which would be *a field*, pointing to *the world* in the antitype; this chapter deals with Ruth becoming Boaz's wife, which, in the antitype, would point to *the bride becoming Christ's wife*; and this chapter ends with the mention of David, pointing to *the greater Son of David* in the antitype. The Book of Ruth ends exactly where the opening section of Scripture in Genesis ends - detailing events having to do with the seventh day, the Messianic Era out ahead. The inheritance (a field), once it had been redeemed, then belonged to Boaz and Ruth (now his wife) in the type; and the inheritance (the world), once it has been redeemed, will then belong to Christ and His Bride (who will then be His wife) in the antitype. And, in the antitype, *Christ as King (as the greater Son of King David), with His wife as consort queen, will rule over the redeemed domain.*

The Bride Becomes His Wife

The future marriage of Christ and His bride will occur exactly in accord with the type set forth in Ruth chapter four, not in accord with the way things are done in the modern world, whether in the East or in the West. As Boaz purchased Ruth through the process of redeeming a forfeited inheritance, so will Christ purchase His bride through the process of redeeming a forfeited inheritance (forfeited by the first Adam in Genesis chapter three (Rom. 8:20-22)). And, as Ruth automatically became Boaz's wife through this redemptive process, so will it be with Christ and His bride. The bride (having previously been revealed at the Judgment Seat) will automatically become Christ's wife through His redemption of the forfeited inheritance.

1. Redemption Completed

The redemption of the forfeited inheritance is seen occurring in Revelation chapters six through eighteen. The seven-sealed scroll in Revelation chapter five contains the redemptive terms for the forfeited inheritance (the earth), and chapters six through eighteen reveal the seals being broken and these terms being carried out. Then, in chapter nineteen, after the terms set forth in the seven-sealed scroll have been carried out, after the inheritance has been redeemed, the bride is seen as Christ's wife.

Revelation 19:7-9

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

And note the reverential awe and excitement in heaven surrounding *the redemption of the forfeited inheritance*, which allows this statement concerning Christ's wife to be made. The twenty-four elders, along with the four living creatures, "*fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia*" (v. 4). Then "*a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great*" (v. 5). Then a voice was heard, described as that of "*a great multitude... many waters... mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*" (v. 6). And even John, having seen all this, could do little more than *fall at the feet* of the one showing him these things (v. 10).

Thus, the Book of Revelation, up to this point in the book, centers *far more* around the Church in heaven than around Israel and the nations on the earth. This book begins with the Bride of Christ removed into heaven and judged, followed by the twenty-four elders casting their crowns before God's throne (chs. 1-4). Then it continues with the search for One found worthy to loose the seals of the seven-sealed scroll - containing the redemptive terms of the forfeited inheritance (ch. 5). And, in succeeding chapters, covering Daniel's unfulfilled Seventieth Week, the book deals with the inheritance being redeemed, with the bride then being seen as Christ's wife at the end of this redemptive process.

The redemption of the inheritance in chapters six through eighteen has to do with *the domain* which Christ and His wife, His consort queen (ch. 19), will rule over during the succeeding Messianic Era (ch. 20). And it is in the preceding respect that events in these chapters really have to do *far more extensively* with the Church than with Israel, though the Church of the Firstborn will be in heaven when these events unfold on earth. (Note Rev. 5:1-7 in the light of events surrounding the nearer kinsman and Boaz in Ruth 4:1-8. The Father, in possession of the seven-sealed scroll, will be unable to redeem the inheritance [vs. 1-4]. It would mar His Own inheritance. *These redemptive rights will have to be passed on to the Son* [vs. 5-7].)

2. The Marriage Festivities

When Scripture deals with the "marriage" of Christ and His bride, as in Rev. 19:7-9, the reference is always to *festivities surrounding the marriage*, not to a marriage itself. There will be no marriage per se, as we think of marriage in our modern-day culture. There wasn't one in the type, and there won't be one in the antitype either. And this is an easy matter to see in both the type (Ruth 4) and the antitype (Rev. 5-19).

The wedding festivities surrounding the marriage of God's Son will occur in heaven *following* the redemption of the forfeited inheritance, for the entire redemptive process must be carried out before the bride can become Christ's wife. And this can be clearly seen from the context of Rev. 19:7-9, where these festivities are mentioned. In this passage, these festivities are seen occurring *immediately following* the redemption of the forfeited inheritance (chs. 6-18) and *immediately preceding* Christ's return to the earth (19:11ff).

Near the end of Christ's earthly ministry, He gave a parable concerning a whole panorama of events surrounding these marriage festivities. And this parable was given within the framework of the offer of the kingdom of the heavens, first to Israel, then to the Church. This is the Parable of the Wedding Feast, and it will be discussed at length in a later chapter.

Facts about the Pearl

It would be of interest at this point to call your attention, first of all, to the fact that the pearl is not an Old Testament stone. It was not one of the stones in the breast plate of the high priest, neither is the word pearl found in the Old Testament at all. The occurrence of the word *pearl* in Job 28:18 is a mistranslation. The Hebrew word should be translated *crystal*.

The pearl comes from the oyster which is unclean to the orthodox Jew, and for that reason the pearl has never been appreciated by the Jewish people. The pearl is a New Testament stone. Our Lord used the hid treasure to symbolize Israel; here He is using the pearl to symbolize the Church. The hid treasure comes from the field, which is the world. The oyster bearing the pearl comes from the sea, which symbolizes the Gentile nations. The Jewish people looked on the Gentiles as dogs, that is, the basest of human beings. The oyster, living in the muck and mire of the sea, is one of God's refuse gatherers – *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1Cor. 1:26)*.

A foreign particle gets into the side of the oyster and as it protects itself, a substance is built up around this particle. Slight streaks of blood go into the forming of this covering, giving it a pink shade. As the pearl continues to form, a beautiful, lustrous stone is produced. The oyster gives its life when it is broken open and the pearl is removed. The pearl is the only stone which cannot be divided and made into two or more. It is the only stone that may be called a living stone because it grows while in the oyster. It is the only stone whose beauty is enhanced by use. I have been told that unless genuine pearls are worn they lose their luster, but that contact with human flesh restores such luster.

I am sure by now you have been able to see that the Lord chose this pearl of great price to symbolize His Church. According to Acts 15:14, He, by His incarnation, made Himself of no reputation, and from His riven side flowed the blood which brought into existence the Church, the one pearl of great price.

The Church of the Firstborn is an entity which cannot be divided and made into two. It is one. It is a living organism, and its beauty shines out all the more through its activity in faithfulness to the Lord. Ephesians 1:4 reveals to us that we were found before the foundation of the world, and according to Philippians 2:5-8, Jesus sold all that He had. In John 19:30 where He said, "It is finished", He calls attention to the fact that He had paid in full the price for His Church – the *one pearl of great price*.

Thus the Lord shows the conclusion of the matter concerning the Church in this present dispensation.

The Secondary Interpretation

In the second interpretation of the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price, the man is not the Lord Jesus, but is the born again Christian. The pearl of great price that he finds is the realization on his part of the immeasurable value of the prize of the first resurrection. He is seeking pearls of wisdom in the Word of God, and at some point he hears and understands the Word of the Kingdom.

Matthew 7:6

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Matthew 13:23

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

For the joy that is set before him, he then goes and sells all that he has, and buys that pearl of great price. For the pearl of great price is not given - it must be bought. It is bought by denying self, taking up the cross, and following Jesus. It must be *strived* for. It is the same as Paul described as the "prize of the high calling of God" – the first resurrection.

Hebrews 12:2

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Matthew 19:21

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure (the pearl of great price) in heaven: and come and follow me.

Matthew 25:9

But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

Revelation 3:18

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

THE PARABLE OF THE NET

Matthew 13:47-50

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: 48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. 49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, 50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Because of the confusion pertaining to this parable and because it is uniformly called the gospel net, I want to establish a fundamental truth pertaining to this mystery.

If you have noticed the chronological sequence of the parables from the sower down to the dragnet, you have seen that the parable of the dragnet takes place after Israel's recognition and recommissioning as portrayed in the hid treasure. You have also recognized the fact that the parable of the dragnet takes place

after both the treasure hidden in the field (Israel) has been brought back to her place of rulership over the earth, and the pearl of great price (the Bride of Christ) has been redeemed. The next event to take place chronologically is the judgment of the Gentile nations.

After God's dealings with Israel as the hid treasure and with the Church as the one pearl of great price, we have the dragnet (the largest of nets or seines known to man) cast into the sea. The symbolism of Scripture is uniform, and throughout the Scripture the land pertains to Israel while the sea pertains to the Gentiles. So, in this parable, the angels cast a net into the sea, depicting the Gentiles, and gathers in of every kind until it is full. This is seen in Matthew 25:

Matthew 25:31-46

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Matt. 13:47 - So shall it be at the end of the world (age) – This tells us when this event occurs. God has finished His dealings with both Israel and the Church. This corresponds to Matt. 25:31: *then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory*.

Matt. 13:47 – a net that was cast into the sea - The only group left on earth that has not been dealt with is the Gentile nations that remain alive at the end of the Great Tribulation; none of this group ever took the mark of the beast. Thus we see the net cast into the sea of the Gentiles. This net is cast by the angels (v.49). This corresponds to Matt. 25:32 - *And before him shall be gathered all nations*:

Matt. 13:48 – and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away - This corresponds to Matt. 25:32 - *and he shall separate them one from another*

Matt. 13:49 – the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just – How this separation of the wicked and the just is determined is shown in Matt. 25:34-46 above. This is not a judgment based on these being saved or unsaved. At this point, the saved have all been dealt with at the Judgment Seat of Christ. *There are no living, flesh and blood Christians remaining on the earth at this time.*

All remaining flesh and blood Christians were removed at the 2nd gleanings rapture which takes place between the 6th and 7th Vial Judgments (specifically at Rev. 18:4 – this is discussed in detail later in this book)..

Luke 18:8

Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

This answer to the above question is inherent in the Greek construction: NO!

The basis for *this* judgment shown in The Parable of the Net is solely how they treated "*His (my) brethren*", the Jews and the Christians. This is the ultimate fulfillment of God's ancient promise to the Jews:

Genesis 12:3

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

This is not a judgment of faith, but by a law of works — and this law is quoted above: "*inasmuch as ye have done it*"; "*inasmuch as ye did it not*".

Church standing departs with the day of Grace: righteousness - that is, law - returns; therefore Old Testament distinctions once again sever the nations. This is most strangely disclosed here when the entire mass of mankind is brought before the Lord on Olivet. The treatment of the Jew - God's people once again, with the enormously rich added asset that Incarnate Deity has since been born of that race - becomes the criterion of international Gentile judgment. "*Inasmuch as ye did it*" - good or bad - "*unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me*"; for the Saviour identifies Himself, on this Judgment Throne, with the race out of which He was born; and this crucial dividing line Christ drives through the entire mass of humanity alive on earth in those closing years. So, exactly as of old, Israel, irrespective of its internal spiritual condition before God, is again the Chosen Race, chosen with a Divine choice which God demands that the nations shall recognize. "ALL THAT DEVOUR HIM [Israel] SHALL BE HELD GUILTY: evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord" (Jer. 2: 3).

Notice the exact terminology expressed in Matt. 25: *Come, ye blessed of My Father* (v. 34) – these are blessed because of their treatment of "*My brethren*". Notice that Jesus does not refer to them as "*our brethren*", but as "*My brethren*". In addition, He does not refer to "*our Father*", but specifically to "*my Father*". When speaking of Christians, Jesus uses the terminology "*My Father, and your Father*" (or *our Father*).

John 20:17

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

These are *all* lost Gentiles who have not taken the mark of the beast, and who have survived the Great Tribulation. These are the Gentiles who will repopulate the earth during the Millennium in their flesh and blood bodies. It is obvious from both the way Jesus addressed them, and their professed ignorance of Him, that none of them know the Lord. At his point in time, that both groups addressed Him as Lord means nothing as to whether any of them were born again; both groups acknowledged Him as Lord because of His obvious overwhelming power over them both as God and as King.

These "blessed of my Father" *inherit* the kingdom in a different sense than the "called, and chosen, and faithful" Christians. The chosen cannot inherit the kingdom in flesh and blood bodies – they must have glorified, resurrected bodies. But the "blessed of my Father" spoken of here inherit the kingdom in the sense of being granted *entrance* to the kingdom as *flesh and blood subjects*. These will later hear, and hopefully most accept, the Gospel of the Grace of God preached to all the nations during the millennium by the re-commissioned Nation of Israel.

And in the selection of the "blessed of my Father" shall be brought to pass that which was prophesied by Jesus:

Matthew 10:42

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water [I was thirsty, and you gave me drink] only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Likewise, that which Paul quoted in Romans will apply:

Romans 9:15

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

No doubt most of these unsaved Gentiles allowed to repopulate the earth during the millennial reign will be saved by re-commissioned Israel going forth to all the nations with the gospel; likewise, so will the children they produce. Notice that the kingdom has been prepared for these Gentiles "*from* the foundation of the world [system – 'kosmos']", whereas for the Church, this election was made *before* the foundation of the world [system].

Ephesians 1:4

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Matt. 13:50 – *And shall cast them into the furnace of fire* – this corresponds to Matt. 25:41 - *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. This is the fire of Hell, where all those who died lost are presently awaiting the Great White Throne judgment at the end of the millennium. This is evidenced by the terminology "prepared for the devil and his angels". [Technically,

the "abyss" is Tartarus, (a lower portion of Hell) - the "pit", or the "abyss", which all the demons dread (because, even now, they know their ultimate destination)].

Thus, we see the conclusion of the matter of the endtimes as concerns the Gentiles.

So, in these last three parables, we see the final disposition, as relating to the Kingdom of Heaven (prior to the beginning of the 1,000 year reign), of the three groups into which God has divided all mankind:

- 1.) The Jews – The Parable of the Hid Treasure.
- 2.) The Church – The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price.
- 3.) The Gentiles – The Parable of the Net.

And, thus we have seen in the Parables of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew 13 a chronological depiction of the entire Church age from its inception to its final disposition prior to the commencement of the next glorious age - the 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ on earth.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

The occasion for this parable is found in the preceding chapter:

Matthew 21:43

Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Here, we find Jesus announcing that the Kingdom of Heaven would be taken from Israel and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Although this prophetic announcement did not come about immediately, it nevertheless prepared the way for the introduction of the mostly Gentile Church recorded in this parable.

Before we begin with its interpretation, two things must be kept in mind. First, the kingdom had been proffered to Israel based on a national repentance. This was the purpose of the preaching of the "gospel of the kingdom" both by John the Baptist and by Jesus (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). If the leaders of Israel had repented and brought forth national fruit, Israel would have had the privilege of being in the kingdom with all *spiritual* blessings. Instead, they became a nation set aside, with future earthly blessings to be given to them through the unconditional Abrahamic covenant. Individually, they could be saved and become a member of the Church and the bride, and many did. However, as a *nation* (Israel) they lost this privilege when they rejected and slew Jesus as the heir of the vineyard (Matt. 21:38-39), and as the chief cornerstone (the King – Matt. 21:42).

Secondly, the kingdom that Israel lost is shown to be given by Jesus to a *nation* bringing forth the *fruits* thereof. This is a holy nation and is identified by Peter as the Church (1Peter 2:9-10). Notice that the kingdom was not given to this nation based on salvation only, but rather on *works* after salvation [*bringing forth the fruits thereof* (Matt. 21:43)]. Accordingly, not all Christians will be privileged to rule and reign with Christ over the kingdom, but only those who produce spiritual *fruits*. With this in mind, we have a key to the following parable that I will elaborate upon. This parable is based on *works* leading to Salvation of the *Soul*, and not of the *spirit*.

The Parable

Matthew 22:1-14

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, ² The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, ³ And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. ⁴ Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. ⁵ But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: ⁶ And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

In the above Scripture, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a king whose invitations to his son's wedding feast are ignored twice for varying reasons. The first time was because the guests were "unwilling to come" (Matt. 22:3). The second time was because "they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business" (Matt. 22:5). This second wave of the king's servants is severely mistreated by the rejecters (Matt. 22:6) and thus this provokes the king, and so he "sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire" (Matt. 22:7).

The parable takes a dramatic turn at midpoint, when the previous group of rejecters is no longer called, but rather, the invitation goes out to the public at large (Matt. 22:8-10). The second half is more sharply contrasted to the first half with the unexpected inclusion of a man found without proper royal wedding feast attire (surprisingly, it would seem) within the feast itself (Matt. 22:11-12). Having made this discovery, the king orders his servants to "bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:13).

This is one of twelve parables in Matthew concerning the *future* "Kingdom of Heaven" and one of three which speak of "the outer darkness" (which only occurs in Matthew's Gospel, 8:12; 22:13; 25:30), and a place where there "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:12; 25:30). Because of the king's reaction to the man who attended the royal wedding feast improperly clothed, and the man's reaction ("he was speechless") and his ultimate reaction ("in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"), the prevailing interpretation of this parable is presented as the loss of a believer's eternal salvation, or a person who in reality was never truly a believer in the first place.

I will demonstrate that such an interpretation of this passage thoroughly ignores the context, thus resulting in an incorrect interpretation. And by forcing a non-contextual interpretation, one is left with (1) an erroneous view of salvation by God's grace through faith; (2) an erroneous view of the purpose of the Church Age; (3) an erroneous view of the coming judgment of Christians which will determine whether or not they will be part of the Bride of Christ; and finally, (4) an erroneous view of the absolute and perfect justice of God.

The Parable's Setting in Matthew 22:1-14

The Context of the Parable

Matthew's parable occurs in the midst of great conflict between Jesus and the Jewish religious authorities. The Lord has made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1-11) and has poured out His indignation

on the moneychangers, buyers, and sellers in the Temple (Matt. 21:12-17). Following the incident of Jesus cursing the fig tree in Matthew 21:18-22, the chief priests and elders confront Jesus with a question concerning His authority (Matt. 21:23). After confounding them with a question of His own (Matt. 21:24-27), Jesus responds with three parables.

The first parable in Matthew 21:28-32 condemns the leaders for not heeding the message of John the Baptist. In the second parable, Matthew 21:33-44, Jesus compares the authorities to some wicked vinedressers who kill the son of the owner of the vineyard. The final parable of this trilogy, our passage before us, is the parable of the royal wedding celebration. From Matthew 22:40 and following are the efforts of the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees to trap Jesus with difficult questions in order to find some charge against Him. Knowing their intentions, Jesus skillfully answers each one and then follows with a question of His own concerning the identity of the Son of David (Matt. 22:41-45). According to Matthew 22:46, no one was able to come up with an answer; nor was anyone willing to question Jesus any further. Indeed, this is the last confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish authorities until His arrest in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:47-56).

The public ministry of Christ has now lasted more than three years, and in a few days He will seal the verbal testimony of His sinless life with the still more eloquent testimony of His vicarious death. Never was He more anxious than during these closing days to speak to those of His own nation of the riches of God's grace; and never did His message of mercy and His thrilling call to repentance, as the prime condition of mercy, meet with more malignant opposition and open contempt from the leaders of the people than during these pathetic and tragic days. Such strained relations between him and the Jewish Hierarchy could not continue much longer without precipitating a bloody crisis. And they knew it quite as well as He. They were convinced that their social and religious prestige must be recovered and vindicated, even though to do so necessitated the judicial murder of the Prophet of Nazareth. They resolved to take no chances.

Jesus knew quite well that the main cause of His failure to get the ear and sympathy of the masses was chiefly owed to the attitude of their religious leaders towards Him - hence the words of the warning concerning the leaven of the Pharisees. Indeed, it was with difficulty He was able to rescue the Twelve from its foul contamination. He also foretold the same evil in this present age (Matt. 13:33). But notwithstanding the admonition, the deadly leavening process goes on as if never a word of warning had been spoken.

In Matt. 19:1-2 we find the Man of Sorrows heading towards Jerusalem for the last time. On the way He speaks several parables – all of which were calculated to exhibit the supreme folly of the Jews in their rejection of Him as their Messiah, and thereby their forfeiture of the Messianic Kingdom. One of the most pathetic events of that day was His meeting with the rich Young Ruler, and the turning away of the questioner with unutterable sorrow in his heart, unable to realize that his grief was entirely owing to mistaken views of life. So it is today.

But when the elders, priests and high priests heard the reception given Israel's King as He entered the City and the people shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest", their envy and malice knew no bounds. On the other hand what a fearless and fearful indictment of the religious leaders of His day is that contained in Matt. 23. May we not fail to see in these scathing words of inspired denunciation the typical reference to and prophetic forecast of a still more severe declaration of righteous wrath to be pronounced on another generation at His second advent.

Luke 23:31

For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

It is a common remark among many commentators that this or that Scripture is for the Jews, and to assume that thereby the Christian need not pay any attention to its admonition, or rebuke. This is a dangerous business. Let there be no doubt in the reader's mind that owing to the fact of his having greater light than those in the above parable has an even more searching application to the Christian today than it had to the Jew of our Lord's Day.

The vitiating presupposition that its application is to the sinner, while in reality it is to the children of God, will prove to be the downfall of untold numbers of Christians today. That which was a fundamental weakness in the typical Jew while reading his Bible is equally apparent in the history of biblical interpretation during the present Church Age. And that is, the disposition and the desire to pass over and get rid of all portions of God's word of truth and righteousness which speak of judgment on God's people. It is doubtful if there is a single writer of repute from the fourth century onwards in whom this innate tendency is not more or less visible. I do not mean to say that it was intentionally so in all cases. Habits of thought may become cruel masters.

The Introduction of the Parable (Matthew 22:1)

"And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying"

The parable opens in a typical way. The recipients of the parable are identified by the pronoun "them". This refers back to "the multitudes" in Matthew 21:46.

Within the immediate context (Matt. 21:46), the crowd considered Jesus to be a prophet (Deut. 18:15-19). Previously, at the triumphal entry, the crowds called Jesus a prophet (Matt. 21:1) and proclaimed Him as the Son of David (Matt. 21:9). This ties back to the testimony in Matthew 20:30-31 of the two blind men on the road out of Jericho: *"Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David"*. Because this entire episode is full of messianic implications, it seems most reasonable to see the parable of the wedding celebration as being addressed to a crowd of people - many of whom believed Jesus to be the promised Messiah - and not just the religious leaders who had rejected Him. We would thus expect the lesson of the parable to be primarily directed to those who had believed in Christ.

II. The First Call of the King (Matt. 22:2-3)

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come".

The parable proper begins in verse 2. The setting of the parable is a royal wedding party and it is compared to "the kingdom of heaven".

The predominant significance of a "wedding celebration" in the New Testament is eschatological. The Jews generally associated the concept of the wedding feast with the future reign of the Messiah. As I have stated before, the kingdom of heaven is the future, eternal, and righteous reign of the triune God, manifested by the incarnate Son of God, over the creation and the earth (Dan. 2:44-45; 7:13-14, 27; Luke. 1:33; Heb. 1:8-9; Rev. 11:15; 19:1 – 20:3).

The first characters of the parable are "the king" and "his son". The imagery of "the king" here refers to God the Father with Christ being "his son". That this is so can be shown from the identical terminology of Matthew 18:23. This is the only other time the expression "a man, that is, a king" is used in the New Testament and it is explicitly identified by Jesus as God the Father (Matt. 18:35).

The term "wedding celebration" occurs sixteen times in the New Testament (Matt. 22:2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 25:10; Luke 12:36; 14:8; John. 2:1, 2; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 19:7, 9) with the unambiguous meaning of "wedding" or "wedding celebration". It occurs most often in an eschatological setting, the best example of this being the description of the marriage of the Lamb in Revelation 19:7-9. There, the faithful saints are symbolically bound together in marriage to their Lord.

The wedding celebration had great eschatological symbolism for devout Jews. The marriage of God and Israel is illustrated in the Old Testament passages like Isaiah 62:4-5; Jeremiah 2:2; 31:2; Ezekiel 16:32; and Hosea 2:2. In Isaiah 25:6-9, 65:8-16, and Psalm 22:26-29, the messianic reign is compared to a feast or banquet.

Thus, the introduction to the parable in the first two verses establishes the eschatological setting of the parable. This is due to the imagery associated with the wedding celebration. Whatever the parable is about, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to it.

The Invitation (Matthew 22:3a)

The time had come for the wedding celebration to begin. In accordance with Jewish marriage customs of the day, the king sends "his servants" to contact those who had previously been invited and to advise them to come to the wedding celebration. Typically, at some time prior to the banquet, invitations were sent. Then, when the time for the celebration itself arrived, the servants were sent to advise that everything was ready and it was time to come.

The Response (Matthew 22:3b)

Those initially invited reject the offer: "they were unwilling to come". They were expected to attend the royal function but refused to do so (the imperfect tense of "unwilling" indicates a persistent and deliberate refusal). To decline an invitation by a commoner without a legitimate excuse would be insulting. However, to do this to a king would be even more so. This repudiation of the king sets the stage for the second call to the wedding celebration.

III. The Second Call of the King (Matthew 22:4-6)

"Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, 'Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast'." But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them'".

The Second Invitation (Matthew 22:4)

The king now issues a second invitation. The king sends more servants to the same group of people. The message is more specific than before, possibly to provide added incentive for them to come. The first part of the message concerns the nature of the wedding banquet. This meal is now ready and waiting. The king has already prepared everything in advance, anticipating the acceptance of his invitation to the banquet.

The menu of "oxen and fattened livestock" indicates a feast of great magnitude. In addition, since the animals had already been slaughtered, they must be eaten immediately. There is, therefore, a sense of urgency in the message. The message is summarized in the phrase, "everything is ready". The king has gone to great lengths to prepare the banquet for the people. Based on their expected acceptance of his invitation, he has made everything ready.

Notably, the invitation ends with a final plea: "Come to the wedding feast". The king earnestly desires the presence of the people he had invited to the wedding celebration. He has expended much effort in preparing the feast and has overlooked their first rejection.

How absurd to apply the parable to the unsaved sinner. It has nothing to do with such. The Holy Spirit says,

John 1:11

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

The Messiah began His preaching with the words, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand". This, too, was the message of John the Baptist. The establishment of the Kingdom and thereby the accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham and David was impossible except on the basis of repentance and a mighty turning to God. But when Israel's Messiah pointed out the sins of the nation, especially of the leaders, which must be abandoned or the Kingdom postponed, their latent wickedness came into open expression. Men in Israel, as in the Church, had no appreciation of spiritual values, with the result that when the call to victory and glory came, "they would not come." It was too Utopian to be true, they thought. They loved the visible, the tangible, the sensible; and so, "One went to his own farm". He could speak of his earthly possessions as "his own", something get-at-able; but the verities of Messiah's Kingdom did not appeal to him. He could say, "my farm", but he could not say, "my God". The Patriarchs could and did Gen 17:2-23; Psalms 7:1-11).

The Second Response (Matthew 22:5-6)

Those invited a second time respond in two ways. Some are apathetic; some are openly antagonistic. The rejection of the first group of people is found in verse 5. The attitude of these people is one of indifference. They leave the servants and return to their own affairs. The first rejection was very insulting to the king since the invitation to a royal function is both an honor and a command. To do this on the grounds of routine business commitments is even more insulting.

A second group of invitees responds with open rebellion and violence: "and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them" (v. 6). The word "mistreated" denotes mistreatment which is of a violent nature and may involve both verbal and physical abuse. This abuse went one step further, because

they also killed the king's servants. Their second refusal of the king's graciousness now sets the stage for his second response.

IV. The First Judgment of the King (Matthew 22:7)

"But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire".

The king, who had previously responded graciously, now responds in wrath. First, those who killed the servants are destroyed. Perhaps the persons of verse 5 who were merely apathetic are spared; but we don't know.

The second act of destruction is the burning of the city of the murderers [this is the only occurrence of "burned" in the New Testament, but it appears forty-six times in the LXX. All but twice, it refers to the physical destruction of something with fire, most commonly cities]. This verse seems to be a clear reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. The repeated rejection by Israel of the invitation of God through His servants culminated in the sacking of that nation's capital.

The king has now issued two invitations to those he invited to the wedding celebration for his son, and has twice been refused. The second refusal brought some a deservedly harsh judgment by the king. The verses as a whole concisely depict the sad history of Israel's nation. God, through His servants, repeatedly offered His people an invitation to attend the wedding celebration for His Son, the Messiah. Their persistent refusal culminated in the Romans destroying Jerusalem.

V. The Third Call of the King (Matthew 22:8-10)

"Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast'. And those slaves went out into the streets, and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests".

Now the king renews his efforts to reward a select group of people with the honor of attending the wedding celebration of his son. He sends out his servants with new instructions. First, an explanation is in order: "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy". The king did not deem the ones he had originally invited as deserving of a place at the banquet.

The new orders for the servants involve an expansion of the invitation. Verse 9 says, "Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast". The imagery depicts the extension of the invitation to the banquet to all people, including the Gentiles. This echoes what Jesus had just told the authorities in Matthew 21:43: *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it".*

The Response (Matthew 22:10)

The obedience and success of the servants is reflected in verse 10a. The servants obeyed their king, went out, and amassed a new collection of people to attend the banquet. Although the text does not explicitly state that an invitation was issued, it must be inferred that one was given and that these people responded

affirmatively. The people are described as "evil and good". This signifies the varying moral states of those who accepted the invitation to the banquet. The servants did not discriminate as to whom they invited. All who were willing to come were welcome.

An example of the "bad and good" can be seen elsewhere in the New Testament. The two named converts of the Evangelist Philip – Simon Magus and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:9-40) – were opposites of the kind suggested in this parable. One was steeped in sorcery; the other was steeped in Scripture. But both, on Scriptural testimony, became Christians (8:13, 38). The "bad" and the "good" were gathered in.

The results of the expanded offer are expressed in verse 10b. The desire of the king to have many people in attendance at the wedding celebration for his son is finally realized.

VI. The Second Judgment of the King (Matthew 22:11-14)

"But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth'. For many are called, but few are chosen".

The Evaluation of the Guests (Matthew 22:11-12)

The scene shifts to the banquet itself (v. 11). The wedding party is now in progress and the king enters the palace to observe the guests. He immediately notices a man dressed unsuitably for a wedding, and a royal wedding at that! It was customary for each person who would attend such an affair to clothe himself appropriately before going. The man obviously did not prepare himself in a fitting way for a royal banquet [this one man is representative of a *class* of people; that is, he illustrates the *principle*].

The "wedding garment" is best interpreted as being a picture of good works. This is most clearly seen in the description of the marriage of the Lamb in Revelation 19:7-9:

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready'. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, 'Write, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb"'. And he said to me, 'These are true words of God'."

The marriage supper of the Lamb of Revelation 19:7-9 is also the only other eschatological wedding celebration in the New Testament where the clothing worn by the participants is mentioned. The wedding clothes in Matthew 22:11 correspond to the clothes worn by the bride at the wedding of the Lamb in Revelation 19:8. She is said to be clothed in "fine linen, bright and clean". Furthermore, this fine linen is described as *"the righteous acts of the saints"*. Moreover, in the previous verse, it states that she "has made herself ready [middle voice in Greek]". This is in definite contrast to the man without the garment in Matthew 22:13, who did not make himself ready for the royal wedding feast.

There are two main views found in the commentaries concerning the identity and meaning of the wedding garment. First, the wedding garment could be symbolic of the *positional righteousness* imputed by Christ when a person believes. The guest without the wedding garment, therefore, would be an unbeliever.

However, if the man in question was an unbeliever, then it seems that he would not be present at the banquet in the first place.

The second position relates the wedding garment to the righteous lifestyle which can be expected of "true" believers. The improperly clothed man is therefore either an unbeliever or a believer who has lost his salvation. The latter of these two options must be rejected outright. The former is problematic because, as before, the man is already present at the banquet. If he is, in reality, an unbeliever, how was he able to enter the banquet to begin with?

The most reasonable conclusion is that the wedding garment is a figure for righteous living. Therefore, this man did not faithfully perform the good works that are necessary to be present at the wedding banquet. This also leads to the conclusion that eternal salvation is not an issue in this passage. This is because of the clear testimony of the New Testament that salvation in the eternal sense is by faith alone. Good works have absolutely nothing to do with securing eternal life. However, according to this parable, they have much to do with presence at the wedding celebration. As stated before, the Kingdom of Heaven Parables have nothing to do with eternal verities.

The call has been extended to the wedding itself, and not merely to the Kingdom as such. That certainly implies a saving belief in the message about the King's Son. However, it involves more than that. It involves also a willingness to be His disciple, to love righteousness and hate wickedness as He did, to take up our own cross as He took up His. In short, it involves a willingness to enter the Kingdom prepared for its special privileges. It means coming to the wedding properly dressed!

The king goes on to question the man: "Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?" (v. 12a). The king has recognized that the man has not adequately prepared himself to come to the royal affair, and so questions him as to why not. However, the offender offered no reply, "But he was silent" (v. 12b). The man had no defense for his negligence.

To summarize, the imagery of this section represents a scene of judgment by God. For many expositors, this is a "final judgment" wherein the righteous redeemed are separated from the unrighteous lost. However, as has been demonstrated, it is a viable, and a better interpretive option, to view the people at the banquet, including the inappropriately clothed man, as believers (this interpretation will be further developed in v. 13). Therefore, it is perhaps more appropriate to understand this occasion as depicting the Judgment Seat of Christ wherein God observes and evaluates the life and works, both good and bad, of believers. He does this to either recompense, or to deny them reward, in participating in the Lamb's Supper. Participation in the wedding celebration, then, can reasonably be viewed as a reward for good works done in a believer's life.

More specifically, the wedding supper can be construed to relate to a faithful believer's co-reigning with Christ. According to Hebrews 12:2, the author states "Jesus", as "the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God". The reference to "joy" is most likely a reference to Christ's future joy as King (Heb. 1:8-9), for which He "endured". In addition, Jesus will be pleased to give the joyful privilege of reigning with Him to believers who likewise will endure. *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne"* (Rev. 3:20-21).

Finally, the idea of reigning with Christ seems to be compared to dining with Him. In Luke 22:28-30, Jesus, speaking to His disciples, said: *"And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"*. Therefore, to be at the wedding banquet, to eat and drink at His table, is to reign with Christ. The authority given to believers by Christ in the kingdom, and the honor of sitting at His own table, the chief table in the day of His royal feasting, are plainly promised as superior rewards for superior devotion.

The Consequence of the Evaluation (Matthew 22:13)

The king responds to the impropriety of the man in verse 13a: "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness'." In that day, not being tainted with sin, our desire will be to rule with our Lord (*Psa. 110:3: "Thy people will volunteer freely in the day of Thy power; in holy array, from the womb of the dawn"*). However, those who are unfaithful now, will be restricted later from ruling with the Messiah.

The man is tossed out of the wedding celebration into "the outer darkness". The subject of "the outer darkness" is fully discussed elsewhere in this writing. Suffice it to say at this point that this believer is denied the privilege of ruling and reigning with Christ in the millennium. He is "cast out" of the kingdom.

The Explanation of the Result (Matthew 22:14)

Jesus concludes His parable with these words: *"For many are called, but few are chosen"*. This fitting conclusion functions as the explanation by the king for his actions (and may sum up in a general way all three of the parables beginning in Matt. 21:28).

The conclusion begins with the plain statement that "many are called". This summarizes that the king invited many people to the wedding celebration for his son. Invitations were extended in verses 3-4, and 9-10. Despite this fact, only a "few are chosen". The point is simply that only those who are appropriately clothed in a wedding garment are chosen to partake of the wedding banquet; these will be *few* compared to the *many* called.

The parable of Matthew 22:1-14 concludes in verses 8-14 with an extension of the offer of a place at the wedding celebration of Christ to all people, including the Gentiles. A few accepted the invitation and prepared themselves with faithful and righteous living which is required for participation in the banquet. But the many, the unfaithful and disobedient believers who did not prepare themselves for the banquet, found themselves excluded from the joy of co-reigning with Christ at the banquet.

VII. Many are called, but few are chosen.

This brings us to the discussion of the 14th verse. Who are the called? And who are the chosen? And what is their relation one to another?

In the parable Jesus speaks of the unfavorable reception and even the open hostility to His message of love for the professed people of God in that day; but at the same time He utters a most solemn prophecy as to a like indifference and hostility in this Church Age to the same message concerning the same but postponed Marriage Feast for the King's Son.

All through the present age, from the Apostles downward, the proclaimers of this real Gospel of the Kingdom have, as a rule, been rejected, evilly treated and often slain. The Master Himself, then Peter, James, and Paul, all suffered martyrdom for their testimony to Kingdom Truth. Preachers of the true doctrine of the Kingdom have always been teachers of the separated life, of purity and holiness.

We now come to the most critical part of our subject, namely, a study of the two principal words in the last verse of our parable - Many are CALLED but few are CHOSEN.

I will state the case that we may see clearly the proposition before us: The Westminster Standards assume that the *called* are not saved; that only the *chosen* are saved, and moreover, that the rest of the human race cannot be saved, but are "foreordained to everlasting death." In opposition to this I affirm that the *called* are all saved, but not necessarily sanctified subjectively; and that the *chosen* are both saved and sanctified, and will therefore have part in the first resurrection, while the former will be excluded (Rev. 20:5-6).

The Rich Young Ruler was called but not chosen, but he almost attained to the second class. I have no doubt the man found in the Banqueting Hall missing the wedding-garment was called, but not chosen. This is required by the trend and purpose of the parable. It is not denied, but rather assumed that he was saved, because otherwise he would surely not be found at the wedding supper. The unsaved are not even under consideration for the wedding supper; this invitation is exclusively to the saved.

The wedding-garment presupposes sanctification. Compare the case of the man with the one talent (Matt. 25:24-30) and understand the force of "*His own servants*." The Man traveling into the far country is Christ Himself. Surely He does not commit the gifts of the Holy Spirit to unsaved sinners. The conclusion following from this fact is that the Kingdom Parables are not for sinners, but for the saved. Please keep this fact firmly in mind.

The Called – Kletos

The word translated *called* is *kletos*, plural *kletoi*. It is the participle of the verb KALEO (long o). Some such noun as *guests* is understood, in the absence of which the participle becomes a noun. Thus we have the verb *kaleo*, the participle *kletos*, and the noun *klesis*, calling or vocation. We should look at each of these with care.

Romans 9:24

Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Here the verb is evidently applied, not to the unsaved, but to the saved. There is no need to insert the word "*effectually*" here. To do so is only to add an element of confusion and discord. So far as the first degree of salvation (salvation of the spirit) is concerned the idea of *effectuality* is already latent in the verb as one of its constituent elements, just as heat is implied in the idea of fire.

Galatians 1:15

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

Was that an effectual call or was it not? What is the use of adding superfluous words to Holy Writ except it be to lend plausibility to an unscriptural theory?

Hebrews 11:8

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

This call was not a mere expression of desire on Jehovah's part; but a work of power which forever separated the Father of the Faithful from the land of his nativity and made him the true servant of the living God. These three citations ought to be enough. As one commentator puts it:

"Everywhere in the N.T. only those are spoken of as *called* by God who have listened to His voice addressed to them in the Gospel, hence those who have enlisted in the service of Christ."

Let that suffice for the verb.

The Participle – Kletos

Romans 1:1

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

1 Corinthians 1:23-24

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

So it is in all other places where the participle occurs. It is never once applied to the unsaved, and it is invariably effectual.

The Noun – Klesis

Romans 11:29

29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

2 Timothy 1:9

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

2 Thessalonians 1:11

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

Thus we see that all three words are used exclusively in reference to believers. There are passages where the participle, followed by a genitive of the person as possessor, carries with it more than is implied in justification and the new birth, and makes *kletos* virtually equivalent to *ekletktos*. As "*Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ (kletoi Iesou Christou)*". Rom. 1:6. Compare Gal. 5:24. "*They that are*

Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts". This can only be affirmed of Christians in whom the claims of Christ are supreme above those of self and the world. All such have on the wedding garment long before they go in to the Banqueting Hall.

But we are not yet done with this little family of words. I have pointed out the fact that whether the verb, the participle, or the noun be employed the implication is always present that the call is effectual. This cannot be denied.

Let us now note the fact that these three words have a twofold use in the N.T. First, when the sinner is called out of the old creation and into the new. This has been the prominent thought in the passages already cited. This call, being in its nature effectual, issues in the new birth and justification. The man so called is saved in the first degree, or salvation of the spirit.

They are employed, second, when the Holy Spirit would lead men, *already saved in the first degree*, on to maturity and thus prepare them for entrance into the Messianic Kingdom (Salvation of the Soul), which fact is symbolized and parabolized in the teaching of the Great Supper (Luke 14:12-24); and also in the Marriage-Feast for the King's Son. This distinction is of the most vital importance. Just a few examples:

Matthew 22:2-3

*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, 3
And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.*

Thus the first illustration is from the very parable we are studying. The Jews were looked upon and treated as a people in covenant with God. How plain it should be that the parable could have no possible application to the people of Greece, or Rome, or any other Gentile nation? They had not been called, but Israel had. *"You only have I known of all the families of the earth".* Amos 3:2. And just as the parable had no application to sinners in that Jewish Age; neither has it any application to them in the present Christian Age. And to so apply it is to miss entirely the vital point in the Master's teaching. And yet this is just the thing that is everywhere done and the traditions of men substituted for the word of God.

In the best orthodox teaching of the Church for centuries, the writers invariably apply the instructions of Jesus to sinners, and characterize their conduct in refusing the offer of salvation as inexcusable folly. But as a matter of fact, deduced by sound exegesis, the sinner is not within the whole horizon of our Saviour as He gives forth the momentous truth of the parable. True, indeed, the Jews were sinners, but their sin consisted essentially in their rejection of the Messianic claims of the Son of Man. John 1:11, 12, 41, 49; 5:39-43. And the sin of the Jew is the sin of the Christian. He will not accept Kingdom Truth. The first quotation given above could be amplified to read as follows:

"God makes every possible effort, with tireless patience, to bring BELIEVERS into the Messianic Kingdom, but THEY WILL NOT COME."

Besides, it is not true that when Christ was crucified on Calvary *"all things were fully ready."* The Jewish Nation had by that time been set aside (Matt. 23:37-39), and a new dispensation, or age, was about to be inaugurated, and God had yet to visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name. Acts 15:14-16. The invitation can be given and accepted now, but the Marriage-Feast cannot take place till the fullness of the Gentiles has come in the consummation of Daniel's Seventieth Week (Luke 21:24). Then according to the parable it is not *sinners*, but *Christians* who are asking to be "excused from glory, from

happiness, from immortality, and from the noblest life possible to man". The Great Salvation of which Paul speaks in Heb. 2:1-3 is the Messianic Kingdom. The majority of Christians come under the description given 1Cor. 10:1-10.

Let's take another example of this use of the verb *kaleo*.

Matthew 25:14

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

This parable of the talents is especially for this Church Age. Those who received the talents were "His own servants" before He, Christ, *called* them into service. This call was based on a previous call whereby they became "His". Two out of the three succeed in the service of the Master, and when "after a long time" He comes they will go into the Marriage; but the third fails in service, and he, though a servant - a saved man - is cast into outer darkness. Herein is the very heart of the parable:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

An excellent illustration of this use of the verb is found in Rom. 8:30.

Romans 8:30

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

There is no reference to sinners here. It is the *second* call. We find the participle employed in this higher spiritual sense in Rom. 8:28:

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

This call is to the Marriage of the King's Son, and it is effectual. Compare 1Cor. 1:24; and Jude 1. *It is not true that all things work together for good to Christians who love the world. Rom. 1:18; 2:1-9; Jam. 4:4.*

The use of the noun with reference to the coming Messianic Kingdom may be found in the following passages:

Ephesians 1:18

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

Ephesians 4:1

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Philippians 3:14

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We have the two calls in verse three of the parable under consideration:

Matthew 22:3

And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

Why did the Revisers, both A.V. and R.V., translate the first verb by *call* and in the second by *bidden*? In the former the verb is in the infinitive present, and in the latter it is the perfect participle, thus indicating that the first call had proceeded the second by some time. In this respect the parable is based on the social customs of the Jews. One commentator writes, "It is still customary in the East not only to give an invitation some time before hand but to send round servants at the proper time to inform the invited guests that all things are ready".

The whole Jewish Nation had been called through Moses and Aaron; and at Sinai God, Jehovah, formally and openly took the Nation to be His own in a peculiar sense, and from that day till the rejection of the Christ they were so regarded. Even *now* they are His, though for a time cast off. The time of their restoration is almost at hand. (Jer. 31:1-40.)

In the eighth verse of the parable we read concerning the King: "Then saith He to His servants, "The wedding is ready, but they which were *called* were not worthy". In the first call out of Egypt the action of God in their deliverance took no note of personal worth, or lack of it. The reason of this was two fold. In the first place, personal or collective worth was out of the question owing to the fact that the covenant people were in bondage and had no teachers; and in the second place, because the theocratic kingdom as then set up at Sinai was only a type, a shadow of good things to come. But with the appearance of Christ, Israel's true King, the time had arrived for the substance to displace the shadow; and owing to the fuller revelation given to the nation through Moses and the prophets they had abundance of time and opportunity to prepare for the second call when the Messiah should appear on the scene in the fullness of time.

But at no time during the Mosaic Age could the invitation to the Marriage Feast for the King's Son have been given to the people of Israel. There were many feasts in that age but they were all typical of the better things to come in the Messianic Age. This is the uniform message of all the Patriarchs and Prophets. And since the King was rejected, the Kingdom postponed and Israel's King withdrawn from earth to heaven, it follows that at no time since then could the people of God either during life or at death go in to the Marriage Supper. The second invitation could be given and accepted, but there can be no actual going in to the Marriage-Feast until the Son comes in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels, having received the Kingdom. Luke 9:26; 19: 11-15. Then all believers will be brought before the Bema (2Cor. 5:10), and there be divided into two classes - the spiritual and the carnal; the just and the unjust; the holy and the unholy. The first class will receive their glorified bodies and will go in to the Marriage, for they are "ready". Rev. 19:7. But the second class will be found naked (without resurrection bodies), and they will be shamed away from the presence of the King and His Bride. 1 John 2:28; Matt. 25:1-13, 30; Gal. 5:19-21; Heb. 12:14. But this does not alter the fact that they are still in possession of the gift of

eternal life. Their loss, however, is inexpressibly great. This is the teaching of our parable in its application to the present age of grace, and to the Lord's people.

When a sinner comes to Christ for salvation (in the first degree, the new birth and justification) there is no more room for personal worth than in the case of the typical Israelite when called out of his bondage and ignorance as a slave of Pharaoh, the embodiment of the world spirit. But as soon as the first call comes there is, as with Israel at Sinai, a second call to "the obedience of faith", a holy walk, a real death to the world, the flesh and the Devil; and all this in order to prepare for a place in the coming Messianic Kingdom to be established at the second advent of Christ. It is here that the secondary use of the verb *kaleo* and its derivatives comes into action. When once the reader gets a firm grip on this great fact it will seem to him almost incredible that the Prince of the power of the air should have blinded the eyes of God's people, and especially of its teachers and leaders, to a truth of such vital and fundamental importance. Yet so far as my studies have gone I can find no trace of it subsequent to the Apostolic Age. But the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is full of it. Once the clue is really found you encounter it everywhere. The carnal mind stands in the way. 1Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7.

It is also a fact well worth noting that secular, philosophical, and even theological education, speaking academically, have no tendency to work in the way of freedom from the carnal mind, but rather to deepen and intensify the bondage until the victim becomes hopelessly insensible to the appeals and promptings of the Spirit of Truth and Righteousness, and finally dies in a state of condemnation. This is an inherent flaw in all of today's seminaries.

The successful seeker after truth must, while not despising educational institutions and methods, find intellectual and spiritual emancipation in the School of Christ or not at all. Luke 14: 25-37; Luke 9:23; Psalm 23.

The above considerations are calculated to prepare us for an examination of the essential significance of the second definitive term in the last verse of our parable the word chosen. As a matter of fact the whole force of the parable is summed up and crystallized in this one verse. Every word contributes its quota to the solemn and almost startling conclusion: The many and the few; the for and the but; the called and the chosen.

Chosen - Eklektos

Here again we have another family group of three words: The verb-*eklego*; the participle-*eklektos*; and the noun-*ekloge* (long e). These words are translated Into English in both the A.V. and R.V., by *choose*, *chosen*, *elect*, or *election*.

The Confession of Faith and Reformed Theology generally assume and even affirm that only the *elect* are saved and the *called* are all lost. We have already demonstrated that the *called* are all saved. What then is the difference in the two words, for they cannot be synonymous? The adversative "but" indicates not only *difference* but *antithesis*.

The *called* in its primary and most comprehensive sense is the sum total of the saved. And the *chosen* are a small company called (secondary sense) out of the sum total of the saved, for special service and honor. It is also evident on the very surface of the parable that the second call, which issues in the election of the few, is not the result of any arbitrary decision of the sovereignty of the Divine Will irrespective of the

freedom of the will of man, for the second call was given to all who had the first call, but the majority "would not come".

Let us turn to the Scriptures and note how the Holy Spirit employs the verb:

Luke 6:13

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

Luke 10:42

But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Luke 14:7

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

Acts 6:5

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith,

Acts 15:25

It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

Thus the verb is invariably used where there is the choice of a few out of many of the same class.

The Participle - Eklektos

Confusion arises from the fact that many do not see one of the most transparent truths in the Bible; namely, the dualistic character of salvation as involved in the two verbs *kaleo* and *eklego*. Following are a few passages which exhibit the Scriptural use of the participle:

Matthew 22:14

For many are called, but few are chosen.

Revelation 17:14

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

1 Peter 2:4

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

Here again we see that it is a few out of many of the same class. But it is when we examine the passages where the participle (eklektos) is rendered into English by the term "elect" that the fundamental fallacy of Calvinism comes clearly into view. Let the reader keep in mind the basic assumption of Calvinism, that only the elect are saved, and I will proceed with the argument.

Matthew 24:22

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Matthew 24:24

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Matthew 24:31

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Luke 18:7

And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

Romans 8:33

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

2 Timothy 2:10

Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

It is surely unnecessary to cite any more passages. The universal assumption of the lexicons, expositors, and theologians, is that the above Scriptures apply to all Christians. But the solemn truth of the matter is that they apply only to a very few Christians. They are the Christians who have faith in God when the great mass of believers are drifting with the world, and are the victims of its ambition, its lust, and its hopeless delusion.

And surely few would deny that while the relation of the Church to the world, as presented in the Scriptures, is one of contrast and even antagonism, the line of demarcation today is practically obliterated and therefore the professing Church must share with the world the now impending wrath. The appeal of the Master is now to the individual only. Rev. 3:21. Indeed, the professing Church will be one of the agencies that will by its sins call down the wrath of God upon the world, of which it has become a part. Compare Amos 3:2 and 1 Pet. 4:17-18.

1 Peter 4:17-18

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Amos 3:2

You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

The Noun - Ekloge

I will note just a few examples to prove the unity of thought and purpose running through this little family of words:

Acts 9:15

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Romans 9:11

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

Romans 11:5

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Romans 11:7

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded

Romans 11:28

As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

1 Thessalonians 1:4

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

2 Peter 1:10

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

The one essential point to be carefully observed in all three words (the verb, participle, and noun) is that they speak of a few Christians selected for a purpose out of the great mass of Christians – this selection is made on the ground of personal fidelity to truth and righteousness and God. In other words, the unholy, I might almost say blasphemous, thought, or dogma, of the sovereign election of a few out of the great mass of sinners to eternal life, and that all the rest are cast off and delivered to be eternally damned, is utterly foreign to the Scriptures, and an inexcusable slander on the character of God.

It is the privilege of every man who has had the first call out of the world to know that he is saved, regenerated, and justified. Being assured of this it is his *further* privilege to listen to and accept the second call to the Marriage of the King's Son and by faith, by cleansing through the word and growth in grace, to get himself ready for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. But such preparation is impossible except by the knowledge of dispensational and prophetic truth. The second call (Salvation of the Soul) was silenced, so far as corporate testimony was concerned, about the end of the third century. Since then the professing Church has been its most deadly enemy. But about one hundred years ago the Holy Spirit began to revive that testimony through the instrumentality of certain individual men, and today it is believed by tens of thousands. But it is useless to expect that the Church, in its

corporate capacity, will ever again place the seal of its approval on this glorious truth so dear to the hearts of Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles; and above all, to the heart of the Christ of God.

It should be apparent by now that the "many are called" are the mass of all saved Christians, and that the "few are chosen" are chosen out of this mass of the saved. In fact, the word used for chosen, *eklektos*, can be properly rendered "called out of the called".

The Wedding Feast in Luke's Gospel Luke 14:15-24

Outside of Matthew's Gospel, the parable of the wedding feast is found only in parallel in Luke 14:15-24. Characteristic of the Lucan passage is its notable omission of the severe mistreatment of the king's servant, of his subsequent destruction of the perpetrators' city, and of the incident involving the improperly dressed man. Because of these omissions, some have suggested that the two parables are entirely different. However, there are no adequate grounds for this conclusion. Instead, Luke's Gospel reveals some valuable insights into Matthew's usage.

The emphasis of Luke's account is on sacrificing worldly interests and pleasures for the sake of discipleship to Christ. The distinction thus is not between unbeliever and believer, but between the faithful and the unfaithful believer. This is a major theme of Luke, and the preceding context, as far back as Luke 12, deals with this very subject. The parable of the rich man in Luke 12:16-21 is a good example. So, too, the parable of Luke 12:35-40 deals with readiness and preparation for the master when he returns for the wedding feast. Jesus gives these teachings, including the warnings, not to unbelievers, but to His twelve disciples (Luke. 12:32-34).

Most significant for the parallel to Matthew found in Luke 14:15-24 is the passage that immediately follows: Luke 14:25-35. It is here where Jesus gives one of His most famous sayings: "*Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple*" (Luke. 14:27). Where the parable in Matthew is essentially the same as Luke's (Matt. 22:5 with Luke. 14:18-19), the basic idea in Matthew is also the same as Luke's. Though Matthew's special details shift his emphasis a little, Matthew 22:5 deals with the priority of discipleship just as does Luke 14:18-19, read in the light of Luke 14:27 (see 14:33). This is where Matthew 22:11-14 fits into the scheme.

These verses could easily follow verse 24 of Luke's parable. In fact, Luke 14:24 is a summary statement for which Matthew 22:11-13 is an example. That is, the improperly dressed man in Matthew's parable is one of those of the group that gave priority to worldly interests and therefore was not adequately prepared for the royal wedding feast.

The invitation originally went out for the noon meal in Matthew 22:4, but due to the difficulty in getting people to attend, the afternoon wore on. It was not until the evening meal in Luke 14:17 that enough people were gathered in for the feast finally to take place.

When the improperly dressed man quite unexpectedly showed up at the evening feast, it was apparent that he had spent his afternoon concentrating on his worldly interests rather than preparing for the royal wedding feast. Because he placed his own interests above those of the king, he was cast out of the feast

into the night where he felt deep remorse and anguish. Thus, it seems that he really did want to attend the feast, but he made no personal sacrifice to be prepared for it.

One valid motivation for being faithful to Christ is the glorious prospect of receiving rewards and, as Matthew 22:1-14 teaches, reigning and fellowshiping with our King in His millennial kingdom. In the words of Paul and John, these kingdom privileges are reserved for those who "suffer" (Rom. 8:17), "endure" (2 Tim. 2:12) and "overcome" (Rev. 3:21). In the words of Christ, they are for the ones who are clothed in the "wedding garment" of good works. The one not so clothed will be consigned to "the outer darkness". For the truth is, while all believers are eternally redeemed, only faithful, committed believers will co-reign with Christ during the Millennium. It is one thing to be a child of God and saved forevermore; but it is quite another thing to be a son of glory (Heb. 2:10) who will ascend the throne with Christ in His kingdom.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Predestination and Election

Down through the centuries, Christians have experienced a great deal of difficulty with the Biblical teaching surrounding *predestination* and *election*. The average Christian is so confused in this realm that he arrives at the erroneous conclusion that the whole doctrine cannot really be understood or explained.

I have heard this erroneous conclusion stated as follows: "Upon entering the gates of heaven, we may see a sign over the portal – "Freewill". But once entering, we may look back and see the sign says "Predestination".

The truth, however, is that no part of the Scriptures can be placed in such a category. God's Word has been given to open up and reveal God's plans and purposes to man, not leave them concealed or unknown. Doctrine surrounding predestination and election forms a part of this revealed Word. And doctrine surrounding predestination and election, contrary to common thought within Christendom, can be readily understood and explained.

Few would deny that it is a gross mistake to assume that the aggregate of the visible churches on earth – made up, as they are, of all who choose to profess belief in the Lord Jesus, however genuine their belief or corrupt their creed or however careless their behavior – are truly born again and thus are part of the body of Christ. But we must go still further; for, as we have demonstrated in this writing previously, not all even of those who truly believe, and are saved through faith, will necessarily be incorporated into the glorified Church of the Firstborn, who will rule and reign with Jesus Christ during the millennium. Thus we can see two great divisions in the makeup of the true Body of Christ as it appears on earth:

1.) Carnal Christians – those who have been born again through faith, but go no further in their Christian walk to actually bear fruit for the Lord. This makes up the bulk of Christians living on earth today. These have answered the first call to eternal salvation through the gospel of the grace of God. These answer to the first three groups in the Parable of the Soils who for different reasons fail to bear fruit.

2.) Spirit-filled Christians – those Christians who have not only been born again, having answered the first call of the gospel of the grace of God, but those who go further and answer the second call to walk in obedience to God's word, and generally walk in the Spirit, and not after the flesh. These answer to the second call according to the Gospel of the glory of God, and will qualify for Salvation of the Soul at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is a much smaller group out of the first group, and answers to the fourth group in the Parable of the Soils who actually glorify God in bearing much fruit:

Matthew 13:23

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

We can readily see the distinction of these two groups in this verse from Matthew we have previously discussed:

Matthew 22:14

For many are called [those answering the first call to initial salvation], but few are chosen [those having answered the second call to Salvation of the Soul].

In the first case, predestination and election (the called) is involved. Hence, it becomes a matter of utmost importance to discover what qualifications are required for so great an honor – whether it be either to eternal salvation, or to the subsequent even greater honor of ruling and reigning with Christ during the millennium.

As regards the first group, then, no one can be saved unless he was predestinated thereto by God before the foundation of the world. We see this truth in the well-known words of Jesus:

John 6:44

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:37

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

So we see the first salvation (of the spirit) depends entirely upon God. But the matter of the second salvation (of the soul) is where "free will" enters. That's why failure to understand the difference between spirit salvation and soul salvation is so important.

We see the truth of predestination of salvation of the spirit is unmistakably affirmed in these words of Paul:

Ephesians 1:3-6

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Here Paul invites the Ephesians to join with himself in blessing God as the One Who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the supercelestial places in Christ. And, in the Greek, the aorist tense indicates that His blessing was bestowed at some definite point of time in the past, that is, when He raised Christ "from the dead and made Him to sit at His right hand in the supercelestial places" (Eph 1:20). For in the same moment the Father also "put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body." (Eph. 1:22).

Now, when we are told that God gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, we are, so far, merely informed that He became its governmental Head, or King. But, when it is added that the Church is His Body, much more is indicated; for it then appears, that He is not like an earthly ruler, having no further

connection with His subjects than to enforce their obedience; but is One Who directs them by means of a vital union, of a life-power which, flowing from Himself, pervades them, and transmits both the perception of His will and the instinctive desire and capability of carrying it out (John 15:1-8).

And so, when Christ, the Head, was exalted with every blessing to the supercelestial places, far above the toil and anguish which He had voluntarily undergone below, it was as the Representative and Forerunner of the members that He rose from the dead. And hence they, too, must soon pass into the same glory, and experience to the full the blessings of their Head, from Whom even now vitalizing currents are ever being communicated to them, while they are yet tarrying in this weary land. Thus the blessings bestowed upon the Head were at the same moment secured to the meanest of His members.

But why does God thus favor some men above all others, so as even to make them members of the Body of Christ, His Son?

It is because He chose them for this honor, in Christ, before the foundation of the world; because, in short, they are His elect. And, if then this be so, surely another and very serious question arises. Upon what ground did our Great God make such a selection from the human race? Was His choice arbitrary, and without reference to anything save His own absolute will?

The answer to this very deep and profound question I will attempt to clarify in this chapter.

There are numerous Scriptures that address the doctrine of election; nevertheless the doctrine is very unpopular in the Church. The largest or greatest division or split in the Church is along the line of this very doctrine, and whole denominations line up against other denominations over their beliefs about it. The doctrine of election was taught and believed long before John Calvin, but he enunciated the doctrine and brought great attention to it. The doctrine of election has been reduced to an acronym called TULIP, and this acronym provides a brief synopsis of what has been called the Five Points of Calvinism. The opposing viewpoint has been called the Five Points of Arminianism after Jacobus Arminius, the Dutch theologian. Therefore, most, if not all Christians can be classified as Arminian or Calvinist. Most have no idea what they are, but they can still be classified under one of these headings based on their beliefs.

It is important to note that both Calvinism and Arminianism teach predestination. Both teach predestination because the Bible emphatically states the predestination of Christians. The person who states that he does not believe in predestination is revealing his lack of knowledge of the Bible, and very likely even his church's profession of faith and theology in general. Unfortunately, there are many Christians unknowledgeable about the Bible, and it is to their shame to remain this way. God himself rebukes them for their lack of knowledge:

Hosea 4:6

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

It is important to note that it is *God's* people who are destroyed. The above verse is in reference to Israel, but it is applicable to the Church also. The following scriptures confirm the same for the Church:

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

1 Corinthians 15:34

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

If we are to be approved by God in regard to our works, we must study the Bible and be able to understand it. Please note that I said "in regard to our works", for we are all approved unto God in regard to our salvation by faith alone. But the approving of our works is an entirely different matter.

Foreknowledge

As noted above, the split among the denominations along the line of Calvinism versus Arminianism does not pertain to the belief or unbelief in predestination, but the *reason* for the predestination by God. Basically, and very simplistically, the Arminian believes that God looked down the corridors of time and knew ahead of time who was going to believe in Jesus; and based on this knowledge, God chose or elected these people to salvation. The Calvinist believes that God looked down the corridors of time, determined beforehand the ones that He loved, and elected them to salvation. The following passage of Scripture establishes predestination without question:

Ephesians 1:4-12

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Two things should be very clear in the above passage of Scripture. The first is that God chose us for salvation before the foundation of the world. The second is that He chose us according to the good pleasure of His will - not ours. It is stated three times in this brief passage that God chose us on account of His will and good pleasure, and not ours. In addition, the following verses expressly state that we are not saved by our own will or choice:

John 15:16

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

John 1:12

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Romans 9:14-16

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

As stated briefly already, the Arminian believes that God elected or chose Christians before the foundation of the world based on his foreknowledge of facts about Christians in the exercise of their will to believe in Jesus Christ. The verses above discredit this common belief, but the following verses are the ones used by the Arminians to support this belief:

1 Peter 1:1-2

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Romans 8:28-30

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

The above passages simply state that God foreknew us as persons and elected us for salvation. But this election is based on knowing us and loving us, and not facts about us. God chose to love us and save us in spite of our depravity, and not because he saw something good in us.

If God chose us because He saw us exercising our will to believe in Jesus, then we are not saved by grace and grace alone, but by the exercise of our will to believe in Jesus Christ. This is totally contrary to all of the Scriptures on salvation by grace and grace alone. The following Scripture confirms that it is grace that saves us, and that even the faith to believe in Jesus is given to us:

Ephesians 2 4-8

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Verse 5 above confirms that we were all spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, but God made us alive spiritually. He revived us spiritually, raised us from spiritual death, and placed us in heavenly places in

Christ Jesus. Verse 7 declares that the reason He did all of this was in order to show the exceeding abundance of his grace and kindness in the ages to come. Verse 8 sums it up by saying that we are saved by His grace through faith. The last half of verse 8 emphatically states that the grace and the faith did not come from us. It was a gift from God. If the faith that saved us came from us, then our salvation would be of ourselves, and we would have something to boast about. Of course, verse 9 demolishes this tenet. The faith itself was God's provision - not ours.

Accordingly, the order of our spiritual rebirth, or spirit salvation, is as follows:

- (1) God knew us and loved us before He created the earth.
- (2) God chose or elected us to be saved at some point in time.
- (3) When that time came, He brought our dead spirits to life.
- (4) He gave us the faith to believe in Jesus Christ and his atoning work on Calvary.
- (5) We heard about Jesus dying for us, and we believed it. The faith with which we believed came from God and not ourselves. Consequently, the entire work of spirit salvation is of God.

TULIP

Calvinism is best known by the acronym that highlights the five points of Calvinism. It has been lightheartedly suggested that Arminianism has the daisy as its flower, since the daisy stands for He loves me - He loves me not - He loves me - He loves me not. The basis for this humor is that the Arminian believes a Christian can lose his spiritual salvation, be saved again, lose it again, and be saved again. This salvation has been likened to a revolving door salvation where the individual is saved, lost, saved, lost, saved, and lost.

Note: I would like to preface this section on the five points of Calvinism with a brief statement of my beliefs about the five points of Calvinism and the five points of Arminianism. Scripture teaches very clearly that man is a tripartite being consisting of spirit, soul, and body. Both Calvinists and Arminians incorrectly teach the spirit and soul are synonymous in the Scriptures. Consequently, there is violent disagreement and animosity between Calvinists and Arminians, and the arguments have gone on for centuries with no resolution in sight. The resolution is really very simple for those who are open to the truths of Scripture. The Calvinists are partially correct in that all five points of Calvinism are true and accurate in regard to the spirit of man. Conversely, the Arminians are partially correct in that all five points of Arminianism are true and accurate in regard to the soul of man. Consequently, I believe the five points of Calvinism in regard to the spirit of man and spiritual rebirth, but I believe a slightly modified version of the five points of Arminianism in regard to the soul of man.

This section is not intended to be an exhaustive argument for the truths of the five points of Calvinism. It is only a brief outline and explanation of the five points, and what they entail.

The acronym TULIP stands for:

- (1) Total Depravity or Inability,
- (2) Unconditional Election,
- (3) Limited Atonement,
- (4) Irresistible Grace, and
- (5) Perseverance of the Saints.

The one that most Christians have difficulty believing is Limited Atonement, and the one that most Christians misunderstand - even Calvinists - is Perseverance of the Saints. Each point will be explained in detail.

Point One – Total Depravity (or Inability to Believe)

Total depravity or inability states that man is spiritually dead in trespasses and sin, and is totally incapable of exercising his free will to believe in Christ. Arminianism states that the fall of man was not total, but that there is enough good left in man to will to believe on Jesus Christ unto salvation. The dividing issue between Calvinism and Arminianism on this point is the bondage versus the freedom of the will to believe in Christ. The Arminian states that man's will is free to choose either the Word of God or the word of Satan. This makes spirit salvation dependent upon man's work of faith.

The Calvinist states that unregenerate man is in absolute bondage to Satan and is completely unable to exercise his free will to believe in Christ. Salvation is, therefore, dependent upon God to regenerate man spiritually before he can believe in Christ. The Scriptures are clear that man's will is in bondage prior to spiritual regeneration by the Holy Spirit. The new birth experience is entirely dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit, and the will of man plays no part in this spiritual birth. Jesus compared spiritual regeneration to the physical birth of a child to make a strong point that man plays no more part in his spiritual birth than he does in his physical birth. Jesus Himself describes the new birth experience as something that happens to a person by the will of God.

John 3:1-8

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

The above is a detailed, complex and comprehensive passage of scripture describing spiritual birth as a prerequisite for comprehending the kingdom of God (vs. 3). The passage also details in verse 5 the additional requirement that a person must be "born of water" in order to enter into the kingdom of God. Entering the kingdom pertains to soul salvation, and is not the same as spiritual rebirth. Of course, spiritual rebirth must occur first, and the additional requirement of "born of water" refers to the sanctification process described in the following passage:

Ephesians 5:25-27

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Notice a few points from the above passage. Whom did Christ love? – The church. For whom did He give Himself? – The church. Why did He do this? So that He *might* sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and that He *might* present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, etc. Notice that this sanctification and cleansing is not guaranteed, but is conditional – *might*.

Back to Nicodemus, notice he asked Jesus about this spiritual rebirth in verse 4, and Jesus answers his question in verses 6-8. In verse 6 Jesus compares spiritual rebirth to physical birth to emphasize the total inability of man to have anything to do with this rebirth. Then in verse 7 Jesus tells Nicodemus not to wonder about it since it is something that comes from above, meaning it is something that *God* does. Literally, this verse states "Do not wonder that I said to you that you must be born from above." Jesus continues his explanation in verse 8 by comparing the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth experience with the wind. The Greek word "pneuma" is the same word for wind and spirit. Literally, pneuma means wind, and figuratively, it means spirit. Literally, Jesus states that the wind blows wherever, and goes wherever it wants to, and we can only hear the sound or see the effect of the wind. He then states that it is the same with everyone who is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Figuratively, the first half of this verse states, "The Holy Spirit breathes life into whomever he desires, and the result is faith through hearing, but we cannot tell to whom it goes, or to whom it influences."

The following are some additional Scriptures that address the Total Inability of man to come to Christ without spiritual rebirth via the Holy Spirit:

John 6:44

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. This verse clearly says that it is impossible for the unsaved man to come to God unless the Father draws him.

Romans 5:6

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 8:7

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Ephesians 2:1

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Ephesians 2:5

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Titus 3:5

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Philippians 2:13

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Colossians 1:13

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Point Two – Unconditional Election

The U in TULIP stands for unconditional election. The Baptist Confession of faith of 1689 states it in terms almost identical to the Westminster Confession (Presbyterian) and the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, as well as the Heidelberg and Belgic Confessions and the Canons of Dort:

"Those of mankind who are predestinated unto Life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable Purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ to everlasting glory, out of His will, hath chosen in Christ to everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto."

We have already seen that the Arminian view is that foreknowledge is based upon the positive act of man as the condition or cause that moved God to elect him to salvation. All of the great confessions of faith state that election is unconditional, and this means that the foreknowledge of God is strictly based upon God's decree, plan or purpose, and His will rather than man's will. The Scriptures confirm this as follows:

Romans 8:28-29

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Romans 9:11

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

The following Scripture confirms that God chose his people Israel because He loved them, and because He would keep His oath to Abraham and to the fathers:

Deuteronomy 7:6-8

For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. 7 The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: 8 But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought

you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

If election were determined based on a foreseen act of man's will to choose Christ, then it would be the wise men of the world, and the noble, who would be better able to make a decision to believe in Christ. Of course, this is not the case, as God chooses or elects those whom He wants to after His own purposes and will, and not man's will or purpose.

I repeat the following Scriptures for emphasis:

John 1:12-13

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 15:16

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Because of the restriction of space, not all the Scriptures that confirm that election is based on God's choice - and not man's choice - are listed here, but following are some of the clearest:

John 6:37

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Based on the *Arminian* position of election, the above Scripture would have to state:

"The Father giveth to me all that shall come to me, and him that cometh to me and stayeth with me I will in no wise cast out". Careful consideration shows this version to be false.

2 Timothy 1:9

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

John 5:21

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

The doctrine of election is unpopular in the Church today, and it was unpopular when Jesus taught it also. When Jesus had finished his discourse on the fact that He is the "Bread come down from heaven", he said:

John 6:65-66

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. 66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

When Jesus told his disciples that election is based on the will of God and not the will of man, many ceased to follow Him. Jesus deprived them of their ego-inflating notion that election is based on some condition of good that existed in them.

Point Three – Limited Atonement

Did Christ Die for all Men or Only His elect?

The following is a written response to a brother with the following question about limited atonement (that Christ died only for the elect):

"Could you please clarify the extent of the atonement, limited versus unlimited? Isn't limited atonement wrong and doesn't the Bible plainly teach unlimited atonement (that Christ died for the sins of all people in the world)?"

This is a very good question and has remained an issue between believers through many centuries. Many people popularly call themselves "four-point" Calvinists because they find the idea of a limited atonement loathsome, or believe somehow that the Bible does not teach it. What is meant by a four-point Calvinist? It is generally understood to mean that an individual claims to believe in *total depravity, unconditional election, irresistible grace* and *perseverance of the saints* but not limited atonement (dropping the "L" in limited atonement) in TULIP (TU-IP). What is interesting about this, however, is that everyone involved actually believes in a sort of limited atonement since we can all agree that Christ did not actually redeem everyone who ever lived. There will be some who end up in the lake of fire according to both positions.

The question, therefore, is not whether there is a "limit" to the extent of the atonement, but rather, what is the nature of the limit and who limits it? Is it limited by God's choice and design or by free human choices? Did God, from eternity, sovereignly determine to whom He would apply the benefits of the atonement, or did God leave it to man's will? This is why I generally like to call my position "particular redemption" rather than limited atonement since both sides ultimately limit the application of the atonement.

If you ask one of these brothers or sisters, *"for whom did Christ die?"* they will generally answer something like this: "the Bible plainly teaches that Christ's death and His work of redemption was not only sufficient for the entire world, but that He actually died for the sins of the entire world." They will back their position with this verse from 1 John 2:2 - *"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."* ...as well as John 3:16 - *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (And leave it there as if this settles the argument).

Unfortunately this view leaves an island of righteousness in man to be able to believe the Gospel without the aid of the regenerating grace which Christ purchased on the cross. It follows that those who hold to an general atonement believe *the one sin for which Christ did not die is rejection of His person and work* (they will cite John 3:18,36). (Some readers may claim that I am setting up a straw man here; but this is actually the position (word for word) currently being taught by such institutions as Dallas Theological Seminary.) So if, as they claim, that Christ did not die for our unbelief, then who did?

What many are teaching, in fact, is that Christ *did not* die for *ALL THE SINS* of the whole world, since they have excluded the sin of unbelief. In other words they claim that Christ died for our breaking of the 2nd through 10th commandments in the decalogue but not the first commandment. So, the obvious question to answer here is "who, then, dies for our sin of unbelief?" Do we atone for it ourselves? Does God overlook our former unbelief because the sincerity of our newly found faith makes up for our previous unbelief? Does the atonement for sins of unbelief kick in only after we unlock the door by "accepting Jesus into our hearts?" It is my contention that Christ died for all our sins including the sin of unbelief. If you agree with me, yet believe in a universal atonement, then why are there still people in hell? If all men's unbelief has been paid for, then all sin has been forgiven - there is nothing left to forgive and we would then have universalism. But 1 John 3:23 teaches "*And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ...*" To disobey this command is a sin (and the greatest sin of all, I might add.) A question to ask yourself is, did Christ pay for this sin or not?

It is not quite apparent to me why the text of John 3:16 should be an argument against limited atonement. The passage does not say Jesus died for everyone, but only that the Father gave his Son for *ALL THOSE WHO WOULD BELIEVE*. It says, "*WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM shall not perish but have eternal life.*" Right? Don't we all believe this? That is why the consistent biblical Calvinists, when presenting the gospel to unbelievers, simply teach that Christ died for "all who *would* believe", which is actually closer to the meaning of this text than the erroneous position that He died for all in a general kind of way, and yet for no individual in particular.

Instead, I believe that the benefits of the atonement will apply only to who will be believers, so He did not die for any person who would remain steadfast in their unbelief. So I would argue that John 3:16 actually supports the definite atonement position better than the indefinite position. Opponents are reading into the text that Christ's death only *potentially* will save someone if they believe without the help and grace of the cross to do so. So in actuality, Christ died for no one in particular in this scheme. His love was only cast forth in a general impersonal kind of way rather than actually coming for His people for whom He set his love from eternity past.

In fact, this teaching comes full circle and devastates all of the other doctrines of grace. Although claiming to believe in Total Depravity, the teaching of the so-called four-point Calvinists is really that man still has the moral ability to turn to God on his own without regenerating grace (a grace purchased on the cross), effectively destroying total depravity, even though the Bible plainly teaches that no one seeks God unless first born again (1 John 5:1; John 6:37, 39, 44, 63-65; Rom 3:11. 1 Cor 2:14, John 1:13; John 3). Some of these verses are listed:

John 6:37

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

John 6:39

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

John 6:44

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

John 6:63-65

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. 64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. 65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Romans 3:11

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

John 1:13

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

This erroneous doctrine says that natural fallen man has the ability and desire (in some cases) to believe in Christ without regenerating grace. It is teaching a "conditional" election since it depends completely on God's foreknowledge of whether or not we will have faith, even though the Bible plainly teaches that election is not conditioned on something God sees in us and that faith is a divine gift (Eph 2:5-8). So in effect *WE* end up choosing God with our autonomous free will in this scheme, not the other way around. Those who deny limited atonement are also surreptitiously semi-pelagian in all the other doctrines of grace as well. Salvation becomes the work of man, rather than a monergistic divine work of grace. Some may argue that God's grace works together with man, but the problem with this is that it still leaves the final decision for salvation in the hands of man. Faith, apart from Christ's work on the cross, precedes saving grace in this view, contrary to everything the Bible teaches.

Romans 9:16

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

John 1:13

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

They claim God's grace would take us part of the way to salvation, thus leaving man's will to make the final decision. So, according to those who claim that the atonement is unlimited (indefinite) there is no divine election in the final analysis, but only humans electing God even though we all know that it is God that chooses us (John 15:16).

John 15:16

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

The *biblical* teaching is that God, before the foundation of the world in His eternal counsels, knew and determined to whom He would apply the benefits of the atonement? (2 Timothy 1 9, Titus 1:2; Eph 1:4,5)

John 6:39

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

What does "that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing" mean except that God, in His eternal councils had already determined who would be written in the book of life and that Jesus Christ came to earth in time to carry out their eternal redemption. Is Jesus' purpose not in sync with God the Father's and God the Holy Spirit's? God the Father elects certain individuals, and the Holy Spirit regenerates them. Does the Son have a different redemptive agenda? No, the three Persons of the Trinity are always consistent with one another. If you believe in election, which you do unless you have torn out almost every page of your Bible, then you must believe that that Christ came to redeem His elect, and the Holy Spirit applied the benefits of the atonement only on those the Father had "given" Christ. It means that He will infallibly bring His own into His eternal kingdom. I hear someone say, "but that's not fair"! Does God owe you anything, my friend? Is He your debtor? The only debt He owes you is His just wrath. His choosing of you is an act of His mercy, an act of His divine good pleasure:

Ephesians 1:4-5

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Before we get to 1 John 2:2 let's familiarize ourselves with some other biblical texts on this crucial issue: First take a look at these passages of Scripture:

Revelation 5:9

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Did Christ redeem everybody by His blood in this passage? Was it the entire world or a limited number? Doesn't it say that He purchased men FROM every tribe???

Hebrews 9:12

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Was everybody's redemption eternal? "Through His blood He obtained eternal redemption" - for whom? All men? Then why aren't they all saved? If all men's redemption is eternal, then we must become universalists.

Titus 2:14

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

In this passage did Christ redeem all men from iniquity, or just some? The second half of the verse also narrows the redemption to a particular people, not all people.

Isaiah 53:5,8,11-12

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.... 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken... 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Are the sins of the whole world "healed" by Christ's scourging in this passage? If they are, then why isn't everyone saved? What meaning does healing have then if it is unlimited? Are the words "my people" referring to all mankind or the many whom He would justify that the Father had "given" Him? (see John 17:9) Since He "bore the sin of many" this certainly is not including the reprobate, but a particular people purchased out of the world.

Now we come to the famous text that our "four-point" brothers put all their weight upon as teaching an unlimited atonement:

1 John 2:2

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

At first glance I must admit that this appears to be a pretty good text to back up their argument; but upon closer examination, it falls apart. The problem is that if the four-pointers read this verse the way they intend to, then we must also conclude that the whole world's sins have already been atoned for (believers *and* unbelievers), and thus all will be saved (universalism). If Christ is a propitiation or atonement for all men's sins, paying for all sins ever committed, then why isn't everyone in the whole world saved?

The verse simply means, (and there is no doubt this is what Paul meant), Christ did not die for every person without exception, but every person without distinction. . All kinds of people everywhere is what is meant. We see this elsewhere when the Scriptures say, Christ "*redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*" (Rev 5:9). Many will argue that He didn't die for our unbelief, which I believe I thoroughly discredited in my argument above. John is speaking, rather, of sins for people *throughout the whole world*, not each and every person's sins.

There are too many problems with saying that the text includes all men (believers and unbelievers) and, as I have shown, this leads to an unbiblical universalism. Saying Christ died for the sins of the whole world is similar in the use of language in many other passages in Scripture such as Mark 1:5 which says, "*And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem..*" If you think the "all" in this passage means every single person without exception, you have missed the point; it means large numbers of people; all persons without distinction, but not all persons without exception.

Christ died for all of the sins of His elect, including their previous sin of unbelief. Belief in the Gospel does not make up for our previous sin of unbelief. Belief (faith) is the witness that God has already wrought grace in our hearts, the inevitable (and Irresistible) response to His work of regeneration in our souls. Study carefully the following verse:

John 3:21

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Christ clearly came (1) to lay down His life for His sheep (John 10:11); but (2) some people are not his sheep:

(1)

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

(2)

John 10:26

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

In the above verse, Jesus clearly states that the *reason* they do not believe is because they are not His sheep. Only those who are His elect are given the faith to believe; otherwise, it is impossible for them to believe. Impossible, for the reason stated in these verses:

John 6:44

No man can come to me [it is impossible], except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 10:26

But ye believe not, [it is impossible] because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

Also, Jesus prayed for His own; but he would not pray for those the Father had NOT given him:

John 17:9

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

But you may ask, what does this predestination teaching do to evangelism? Doesn't it effectually discourage a person seeking to save the lost?

Actually, this teaching does have great practical value: specifically that our prayers for the lost will be effectual. As we go out to do missions, to reach the lost, we can have confidence that we go not in vain but that we carry with us the Word of God which has the power to raise the dead to life. We don't just go in the hope that maybe someone will be saved; or that Christ died for no one in particular. But rather that He died for a particular people to make them His own. If my hope was based solely on whether someone would respond to the Gospel message by their own free will, then I would despair; because no one would respond (Rom 3:11; 1 Cor 2:14). But because God has an specific eternal plan, a bride he has chosen for His Son, I can rejoice in the knowledge that God's word proclaimed will effectually bring home those whom he delivers the inward call (Rom 8:28-30).

Limited Atonement is the point in the Five Points of Calvinism that gives most Christians trouble. Christians who state that they are Four Pointers are leaving this one out. The truth is that all five points

either stand or fall together and not one of the points can be removed without affecting the others. For example, if one believes Unconditional Election, then it naturally follows that Christ died for the Elect. If He has not chosen them for salvation, then He did not die for them.

The following Scriptures are some other ones that Arminians use in their attempts to rebut this point and the point on Unconditional Election.

2 Peter 3:8-9

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

This verse is incorrectly understood as referring to every person in the whole world, but it has to be removed from its context and severely twisted to arrive at this conclusion. Please note that Peter is writing to the following:

2 Peter 1:1

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

He confirms that in verse 8 above by calling them "beloved". He then states that the Lord is "longsuffering to usward". Thus, the Lord is longsuffering to Christians, not willing that any Christian perish, but that all Christians come to repentance. Peter is addressing Christians in regard to soul salvation, and not the world in regard to spirit salvation. Soul salvation is conditional upon repentance and baptism and walking in the spirit. Consequently, he correctly writes to Christians and not the unregenerate. God spiritually regenerates the ones He has elected, and then calls them to repentance. Not all Christians will come to repentance in this life, but God prefers that they do come to repentance so they will not lose their rewards (or "perish"). Most Christians are not aware of how God uses the term "perish". The term "perish" is always used in opposition to obtaining eternal life (or more succinctly, "life for the age".)

The following is also taken to mean that Jesus died for the whole world:

John 3:14-16

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Please notice the opposition of "perish" to "eternal life" in the above. And also notice the uncertainty of the verb "should" – this is a possibility, not a guarantee. If it were a guarantee, the verb "will" or "shall" would have been used. This verse is probably the most misunderstood verse in the whole Bible. It took me a long time before I was able to comprehend its meaning because of my own preconceived notions that came from hearing numerous preachers and teachers misinterpret this passage.

I will insert this comment for your serious consideration: too often, the leading obstacle to obtaining the truth is the preconception that we already possess it. Selah.

It is important to note that the serpent was placed up for the elect Jews in the wilderness. In the same manner, Jesus died for the elect, and the elect are revealed when they believe in Jesus Christ. The Greek word translated world is "kosmos", and it means an organization or group of people identified in the passage, so the "whosoever believeth in him" is the organization or group of people that John is referring to in the passage. Thus, the kosmos refers to believers. The perishing pertains to the soul or life of a man and not his spirit. God loved the Church and gave his Son for it so that all believers could realize soul salvation, which leads to everlasting life. Christians *should* not perish, but they *might* perish at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is the reason for the *conditional* phrase "should not perish". Christians should not perish, but they might. The translators of the New International Version (NIV) have corrupted the translation of this verse (a common occurrence in new translations) to say that believers "*shall* not perish" as shown below:

(John 3:16 NIV) "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him *shall* not perish but have eternal life."

At best, the translators of the NIV do not understand the opposition of "perish" and "eternal life". At worst, perhaps they were attempting to force their own doctrinal beliefs into Scripture.

The great Greek scholar Joseph H. Thayer confirms that "kosmos" is referring to believers in the above passage and not to every person in the world. A student must always look at the context to determine the identity of those who make up the kosmos, since kosmos can refer to any particular group of people or organization. It is important to note that the base word for kosmos is komizo, and it means ones provided for, cared for, and kept from harm. Jesus died for the elect, so that if they are counted as worthy of salvation of the soul at the Judgment Seat, they would be deemed overcomers, and not perish in the Second Death. (More on the second death in later chapters.)

Revelation 2:11

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

It is very important to understand the whole analogy of Moses and the serpent. The Jews in the wilderness were *already* the elect and the people of God. They had already come out of Egypt and been baptized into the Red Sea. They were now perishing in the wilderness. The provision to keep them from perishing was the golden serpent on the pole. That was a type of Jesus Christ who took upon Himself our sins. Gold is deity, and the serpent was cursed just as Jesus was cursed upon the cross.

In order for the Christian to keep from perishing in the Second Death, he must identify with Jesus on the cross. He must keep looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Please note that the Jews in the wilderness could be bitten by the serpents more than once, and Satan and his emissaries can attack us numerous times. Each time we must identify with the cross and die to the old flesh nature and allow Christ to live His life in us.

It is important that the whole passage is speaking of perishing, and it is the *soul* that perishes (not the spirit.)

The following verse also confirms that kosmos is referring to the elect:

Matthew 5:14-16

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

This passage is for the faithful to be a light unto those believers who are unfaithful. The "light" is unto all that are "in the house" (i.e., the elect). It is important to note that the result of giving light is glorification of the Father, and not salvation of the spirit. Christians glorify the Father by bearing much fruit (John 15:8).

1 John 4:10

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

John is writing to believers, and he states that God sent his Son to be the propitiation for *our* sins (i.e., the sins of the elect). The following Scripture confirms that Christ died for "many" and not all. He died for all the elect but not for every single person on the earth.

Hebrews 9:28

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

The following are some other passages of Scripture that Arminians use as a proof-text that God wants everyone to be saved:

1 Timothy 2:1-7

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

1 Timothy 1:15-16

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Paul is writing to Timothy in this epistle, and in verse 1:12 Paul states that Jesus put him (Paul) in the ministry to demonstrate God's longsuffering (i.e., patience) for Christians (*them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting*). Paul was a minister to the Gentiles, and in verse 2:1 above, he exhorts Timothy to pray "for all men". The Greek word for "all" in this verse is "pas", and it means collectively some of all types. Paul is telling Timothy not to just pray for the Jewish brethren, but to also pray for all kinds of Gentiles. Paul follows through with this exhortation by saying that it is good and acceptable to

pray for Gentiles as well as Jews, since God will have all kinds of men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth. Paul then states that Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and men, and Jesus gave himself a ransom for all kinds of men - not just Jews. Paul confirms that he is referring to the salvation of the Gentiles as well as the Jews in verse 7, when he says that Jesus giving himself as a ransom for all kinds of men is the reason that Paul was ordained a minister (i.e., teacher) to the Gentiles.

The primary message in this passage is that God will have all kinds of Gentiles to be saved, in addition to Jews. This is finally confirmed in Revelation when the Church is around the throne in heaven, and the Church consists of men from every tribe and tongue among all kinds of Gentiles on the earth. God has elected for salvation some Gentiles from every tribe and tongue throughout the whole world.

Here's an important distinction to learn about the word "all". Thayer's Greek Lexicon gives the definition of "all" ("pas") as follows:

3956 pas-

- 1) individually: each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything
- 2) collectively: some of all types

Finally, remember that it is not a question of whether or not Christ's redemption was able to cleanse the sins of all men, as we know it clearly could have if this is what He so desired. The question is what does the Bible teach about the divine intent with regard to the atonement, which I hope this short summary has answered.

Point 4 - Irresistible or Efficacious

The Westminster Confession states the doctrine of irresistible or efficacious grace as follows:

"All those whom God has predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by His almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ, yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace."

"This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed by it."

The Baptist confession of faith, (1689 - A Faith to Confess) states this point in almost identical words.

To put the above statement in layman's terms, everyone that God chose for salvation before the foundation of the world is going to be born-again spiritually. No one's spirit salvation rests upon my faithfulness or any other Christian's faithfulness. The spirit salvation of each and every Christian rests solely upon the faithfulness of God. No one is going to hell if I do not witness to that person. If I do not witness to someone to whom God has called me to witness, then God will get someone else to do it, and I will lose that particular reward because of my unfaithfulness.

The Arminian believes that the will of God can be frustrated by the will of finite man on an individual

basis. The Arminian states that man's work of faith comes before God's gift of spirit life. The Calvinist states that God's gift of spirit life comes before man's response of faith in Jesus Christ.

John 6:37-40

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Verse 37 above establishes efficacious grace, and the second part of this compound sentence establishes the fifth point, which is perseverance of the saints.

Even though verse 37 above establishes the certainty of spirit salvation and the eternal security of that salvation, verses 39 and 40 raise a question about the certainty of eternal life (i.e., everlasting life). Jesus very clearly states that it is the will or desire of the Father that all - those who come to Jesus and who will not be cast out - should not be lost. In verse 40 Jesus states that those who "seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life," and this will be the same person that will be exalted at the last day.

"Seeth" means to perceive, experience or acknowledge, and these are the ones who are born spiritually from above. "Believeth on him" means to entrust one's spiritual well-being unto Christ. Everyone who comes to Jesus will not be cast out. That means they will eventually be in heaven. However, for one to realize eternal or everlasting life (life for the coming 1,000 year age) requires the additional criterion that one must entrust his spiritual well-being unto Christ.

Every one of the elect will come to Jesus, but many will be lost in regard to their soul salvation. Eternal life pertains to soul salvation and not spirit salvation. This is the reason the conditional words "should" and "may" are used in verses 39 and 40. God prefers that they remain faithful unto eternal life and rewards, but they may not. They may suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Irresistible grace does not mean that God forcefully goes against man's desire in causing him to do something he does not want to do. The regenerated living spirit of man finds God "irresistible", so he comes to Christ openly and freely. It is the gift of the new spirit nature that makes Christians find Jesus Christ irresistible.

Point 5 - Perseverance of the Saints

The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints is stated in the Westminster Confession as follows: "They whom God accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."

This doctrine has been called the doctrine of eternal security, and it has been shortened to the phrase "Once saved, always saved." The doctrine does not stand alone, but it is a necessary part of Calvinism. The other points of Calvinism called Unconditional Election and Irresistible Grace imply that those who receive these blessings will certainly continue as saved people, but this point states it directly. That is why the five points of Calvinism have been compared to a glove with five fingers, which merge into the

portion that covers the hand. Each finger is an integral part of the glove, and cannot be removed without destroying the glove. A person who states that he is a three point or a four point Calvinist reveals his ignorance of the points that he professes to believe, for they all stand or fall together. For example, many Christians state that they believe four of the points, but they do not believe Limited Atonement. If a person believes Unconditional Election, then a logical outcome of this point is that Christ died for all of those elected, and not the rest. In addition, if a person has been elected to be saved, then he will certainly persevere in his salvation. Otherwise, he would not be among those unconditionally elected.

Unfortunately, many Calvinists incorrectly think that Perseverance of the Saints pertains to perseverance in doing good works. The perseverance of the Christian does not depend upon his good works, but upon God's Grace. Works - either before or after the new birth experience - are not a condition for salvation, so the failure to do good works, or to continue in good works has no effect upon a person's spirit salvation. The truth is that many Christians will get to the Judgment Seat of Christ with no good works to their credit. These Christians are the ones saved in accordance with the following Scripture:

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Verse 15 above confirms that all of a Christian's works can be burned, and he will still be saved. The failure of numerous Calvinists to separate spirit and soul salvations is the reason for misunderstanding the doctrine of perseverance. The primary difference between spirit salvation and soul salvation can be simply stated as follows: Spirit salvation is by grace, but soul salvation and entrance into the kingdom of heaven is by works.

Primarily, the following Scripture confirms the doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints:

John 6:37

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

This verse confirms both Unconditional Election and Perseverance of the Saints. It is also in relation to spirit salvation, but the following verses in the same context address the salvation of the soul and state as follows:

John 6:38-40

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

It is important to note how verse 37 expresses certainty (i.e., will in no wise cast out), but verses 39-40 changes to the conditional or uncertain words "*should* lose nothing" and "*should* raise it up again". The difference between the certainty of verse 37 and the uncertainty of verses 38-40 is the difference between spirit salvation and soul salvation. The translators of the New International Version of the Bible recognized this difference, but instead of seeking to understand the real meaning of the passage, they mistranslated verses 39 and 40 as follows:

"John 6:37-40 NIV All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I *shall* lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him *shall* have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

This is clear evidence that the NIV is a corrupted translation and should not be used for in-depth Bible study. The NIV was translated from the Nestle text, and the following is the American Standard 1901 translation of this same passage from the Nestle text:

"John 6:37-40 ASV All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38 For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I *should* lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, *should* have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

See how easy it is to corrupt a verse simply by changing one word!

Eternal life pertains to the soul of man, and it is conditional. "Will raise him up" pertains to the body, and its redemption is certain (although it may be delayed for 1,000 years – discussed in later chapters.) "Will in no wise cast out" pertains to the spirit of man, and it is certain. This is exactly as the KJV and the ASV translate this passage of Scripture. Spirit salvation is certain and cannot be lost. Soul salvation is conditional upon works, and it can be lost at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Eternal life (life for the age) pertains to the salvation of the soul, so it is conditional. This eternal life is referenced in the Bible in the following passage:

Romans 2:3-11

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? 4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: 11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

The above passage of Scripture is addressing the Judgment Seat of Christ (vs. 3), which is a judgment of works (vs. 6), and it pertains to a Christian who seeks after glory, honor, and immortality of the soul, (vs. 7) as opposed to the Christian who is described in vs. 8-9). Verse 10 confirms that glory, honor, and peace (i.e., the peace of God as opposed to peace with God) comes as a result of works. There are many other passages that confirm that eternal life pertains to the soul, but this passage is the best. Spirit salvation cannot be lost, but soul salvation (i.e., eternal life) can be lost. A better translation of eternal life is the literal translation of "Age life" or "life for the ages." The life or soul that passes through the Judgment Seat of Christ without being totally burned will continue throughout the ages. It is both immortal (i.e., continues forever) and it will receive honor and glory as the just recompense of reward. Many Christians are liars, thieves, murderers, drunkards, homosexuals, gossips, and hypocrites, and they live their lives with the old flesh nature in control. The souls of these Christians will perish at the Judgment Seat of Christ, so they will not be made immortal (at that time), and they will receive no honor and glory in the kingdom. (More on this concept will be discussed in later chapters.)

I am very much aware that the foregoing discussion on predestination and election will not convince many, if not most, to change their doctrine. But I would also point out at the same time that a proper understanding of this issue is not *absolutely crucial* to your understanding of Salvation of the Soul. But the proper understanding certainly goes a long way towards helping in the understanding of how so many verses are pointing towards soul salvation, and not spirit salvation.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Olivet Discourse

To properly understand the message which Christ delivered to His disciples, recorded in Matthew 24-25, one must consider the overall framework of events in Matthew's gospel. The subject at hand throughout this gospel is *the King and the proffered Kingdom*. With the King present in Israel's midst, the Kingdom of the Heavens (the heavenly portion of the Messianic Kingdom - a rule from the heavens over the earth) was offered to and rejected by Israel. This kingdom was taken from Israel with a view to the kingdom being offered to a separate and distinct "nation." The house of Israel, rejecting the King and the Kingdom, was then left desolate.

The discourse which Christ delivered to His disciples on Mount Olivet was given immediately following His pronouncement of desolation upon the house of Israel, two days prior to the time Israel would climax the nation's rejection by crucifying "Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matt. 23:38; 26:2; 27:37). Christ had previously mentioned the *Church*, anticipating what was about to occur (Matt. 16:18). He then alluded to the previously mentioned Church (though the Church was not yet in existence) shortly before His discourse on Mount Olivet as the "nation" which would be allowed to bring forth *fruit* in the realm where Israel had failed (Matt. 21:43; Matt. 21:18, 19). The Church was about to be called into existence to be *the recipient of that which had been rejected by and taken from Israel*.

Christ's discourse on Mount Olivet takes into account all things which had previously occurred (anticipating the existence of the Church) and concerns not only *Israel* and *the Church* but also *the Gentile nations*. Remember our discussion of the "Keys of Three"? His discourse, delivered in a tripartite manner, deals with:

- 1) *the house of Israel* (apart from the kingdom of the heavens) during and following the Great Tribulation (24:4-31),
- 2) *the Church* (in relation to the kingdom of the heavens) during and at the end of what we know as the present dispensation (24:32-25:30), and
- 3) *the Gentile nations* following the Great Tribulation (25:31-46).

Introduction

Matthew 23:37-39

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The nation of Israel spurned the offer of the kingdom of the heavens at Christ's first coming. The reason for this rejection is, in Matthew, chapter twenty-three, attributed directly to the actions of the Scribes and

Pharisees during the time of Christ's earthly ministry. *They sat in Moses' seat* (v. 2). The shadow of regality still remained in the Divine law even though the theocracy had long since been taken from Israel, and the Scribes were the keepers and the Pharisees the legalistic teachers of this law. They, occupying this position on Moses' seat, were the ones who "*shut up the kingdom of the heavens against ['before', 'in front of'] men.*" They were not going to enter this kingdom; and they did all within their power to prevent the nation itself from entering, ultimately resulting in the kingdom being taken from Israel (v. 13; Matt. 21:43).

Because of that which the Scribes and Pharisees did, they experienced a condemnation at the hands of the Lord unlike that which befell any other group. Time after time the Lord said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees..." (vs. 13-16, 23, 25, 27, 29). He called them "hypocrites", "blind guides", "fools", and likened them unto "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (vs. 14, 16, 17, 19, 23-29). The Scribes and Pharisees were the "children of them which killed the prophets" (v. 31). Israeli history from Moses to Christ is marked throughout by rejection, unbelief; and the Scribes and Pharisees constituted a terminal group in this respect. They were the ones who *filled up* "the measure" of their fathers (v. 32; Gen. 15:16). They were the ones present when Israel's Messiah appeared with the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the nation; and they were the ones directly responsible for the nation rejecting the *King* and the *Kingdom*, resulting in the crucifixion of the King, continued unbelief, and continued rejection of the Lord's prophets (v. 34; Matt. 21:33-42). Because of this, the Lord announced that "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth" (going all the way back to Abel) would come, not only upon the Scribes and Pharisees, but upon the nation as a whole (vs. 34-36).

It is this rejection and unbelief by Israel (attributed to the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees) and the consequent condemnation brought against Israel (again, attributed to the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees) that prompted the Lord's *lament* over Jerusalem and statement concerning the nation's coming *desolation* in verses thirty-seven through thirty-nine. The "house" (*house of Israel* [which included the people, temple, city, and land]) was to be left "desolate". The word "desolate" is a translation of *eremos* in the Greek text, which means "desert", "wilderness", "wasteland". This, because of the previous actions of those who sat in Moses' seat, is how the house of Israel was to become in days ahead. Rather than entering into what is termed in Heb. 2:3, "so great salvation" (a salvation in connection with the kingdom of the heavens, previously open to Israel), *desolation* would overtake the nation; and, as revealed in related Scripture, this desolation would last for two millennia and be climaxed by the nation going through the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7) - the coming Great Tribulation. Only then would the nation be removed from this condition.

The establishment of the new state of Israel May 14, 1948 wrought no change in Israel's condition as depicted in Matt. 23:38; nor has any change been effected during the intervening years since. Only a fraction of world Jewry constitutes what is presently called "the nation of Israel" (rather than "the new state of Israel" as it was called at the time of its inception); and those now in Israel are there under a Zionist movement in unbelief, without a temple, sacrifice, etc. Although the Jews will rebuild their temple during the days of Antichrist and reinstitute at least a segment of the Mosaic economy in connection with the temple worship and Jewish life, such will bring about no change in Israel's desolate condition. Unbelief will still prevail; Israel will still exist apart from her Messiah. The desolation cannot be lifted until that day Israel states concerning her rejected Messiah, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (v. 39).

Israel is going to have to pass through the Great Tribulation before that time when the nation calls the

Lord Jesus Christ, "Blessed." This is what the first part of Matthew, chapter twenty-four, continuing the line of thought from chapter twenty-three, is all about - *Israel in the Great Tribulation, followed by deliverance*. As the Israelites during Moses' day were forced to cry out to God "by reason of the bondage" under which the Assyrian Pharaoh had placed them; so will the Israelites do under the future Assyrian, the Antichrist. He will bring Israel into such dire straits through his efforts to destroy the nation that the Jewish people will cry out to the God of their fathers. And as God heard, remembered, and sent Moses back to the people in the past, He will hear, remember, and send Jesus back to the people yet future. At that time, just as Moses was received, so will Jesus be received; and, as deliverance was effected through Moses (beginning with the blood of the paschal lambs), deliverance will be effected through Jesus (beginning with their appropriation of the blood of the Passover Lamb).

(Note that deliverance must begin through the *appropriation of the blood*. This is set forth in the original type in Genesis, chapter three, it holds true in Exodus, chapter twelve, and it holds true at all other points in Scripture. In the prophetic calendar of Israel, set forth in the festivals of the Lord in Leviticus, chapter twenty-three, the Passover comes *first*. *The blood must be appropriated first*.)

According to Hosea 5:15-6:2, it will be "*after two days*", during the nation's time of "affliction" (the coming Great Tribulation), that Israel will say, "*Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.*" And it will be "in the third day" that Israel will be *raised up* to "live in his [the Lord's] sight." Each day in this passage is one thousand years in length (2 Peter 3:8). *Desolation* is to prevail for two thousand years, extending into and through the Great Tribulation; then, at the outset of the third one-thousand-year period (dating from the crucifixion [v. 15]), Israel will be restored. The last of the triad of days, or one-thousand-year periods, will be the Messianic Era; and it will be during that time that Israel will say, "*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*" (Matt. 23:39).

During that coming day, Israel will voice the nation's confession as outlined in Isa. 53:1ff: "*Who hath believed our report...For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant...and when we [Israel] shall see him [Jesus], there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men...and we hid as it were our faces from him...Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...*" (vs. 1-5). It will be in that day that Israel will say, "*Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name [the name, 'Jesus'], and to the remembrance of thee*" (Isa. 26:8).

During the present time of desolation, Israel hates the name "Jesus"; but in the latter days of this desolation, when iniquity once again becomes full and corresponding judgment falls (Gen. 15:16), Israel will cry out for deliverance. This deliverance will be effected through none other than Jesus. And following this deliverance, when the house of Israel no longer lies desolate, the prophecies concerning the relationship which Jesus and Israel are to enter into (as foretold in Isa. 26:8; 53:1ff) will come to pass. But until then it will be a *desolation*.

In the next section, again keep in mind our "Keys of Three".

Three Parts

The Olivet Discourse is a tripartite, connected discourse dealing with the *Jews*, the *Christians*, and the *Gentiles*. The inception of Christianity awaited a future date at the time it was given; but the discourse - given *following* Christ's statement that He would build His Church, *following* the removal of the kingdom of the heavens from Israel, and *following* the announced desolation of the house of Israel - anticipated the "one new man" in Christ being brought into existence.

The *first part* of the Olivet Discourse has to do with the "Jews" (24:4-31); the *second part* has to do with "Christians" (24:32-25:30); and the *third part* has to do with the "Gentiles" (25:31-46). I will demonstrate this shortly in the section below subtitled "Distinctions between Parts."

WITHOUT THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE DISTINCT DIVISION INTO THESE THREE PARTS, ONE WILL INVARIABLY FALL INTO ERROR CONCERNING THE ESCHATOLOGY INVOLVED.

The *first part* of the discourse deals exclusively with events pertaining to Israel in the coming Great Tribulation and with the return of the nation's Messiah at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. Israel had rejected the offer of the kingdom of the heavens, and now the nation must pass through the Great Tribulation and await her Messiah "in the way of thy judgments" (Isa. 26:8). The *second part* of the discourse deals with the new recipients of the offer of the kingdom of the heavens: the church. The emphasis throughout this section is upon *present faithfulness* in view of a *future time of reckoning*, anticipating the kingdom. The *third part* of the discourse deals with judgment upon the Gentiles following Christ's return at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. In this fashion, the three sections of the Olivet Discourse reveal God's dealings with the three segments of mankind - *Jew*, *Christian*, and *Gentile* - during and at the conclusion of the present age. (Note: we saw this same tripartite division concerning the endtimes in the last three parables in Matthew 13 – the treasure, the pearl, and the net.).

In the *Jewish section* of this discourse, God's dealings with Israel are restricted to the coming Great Tribulation. The reason for this is very simple: Israel has been set aside during the present time while God removes from the Gentiles "a people for his name." The time when God will deal with Israel once again awaits the completion of His purpose for the present dispensation. This is the reason that the Jewish section of the Olivet Discourse begins with Israel *already in* the Great Tribulation. This section begins at the point where God resumes His dealings with Israel once again, anticipating the end of their present desolate condition

In the *Christian section* of the discourse, unlike the Jewish section, God does deal with a people during the present time - a time preceding the Great Tribulation. And those with whom God is presently dealing are the recipients of the offer of the kingdom of the heavens *following* Israel's rejection of this offer, which is exactly what is in view in this section of the Olivet Discourse. Events in this section occur during the time that the house of Israel lies desolate.

In the *Gentile section* of this discourse, only the Gentiles are in view. God, at that time in the future when these events occur, will have completed His dealings with Israel and the Church. "*Judgment must begin at the house of God*" (1 Peter 4:17). The Christians and the nation of Israel must be judged first. *Then* God will judge the Gentiles immediately prior to His 1,000-year reign over the earth.

Distinctions Between Parts

There are a number of distinguishing differences which mark the three sections of the Olivet Discourse. Certain things are peculiar to each section. *Parables*, for example, prevail in one section, but they are not used at all in the other two sections; *salvation* and *judgment* appear in quite different settings in each section; and the *time interval* during which events occur is entirely different in each section.

1. Parables

Parables are found in the Christian section (24:32-25:30) of the Olivet Discourse *alone*, which is in perfect accord with the structure of Matthew's gospel leading into this discourse. Parables, in Matthew's gospel, first appear in chapter thirteen. It was at this point in His ministry that Christ *departed the house, went down by the seaside, and began to speak in parables* (vs. 1-3).

The "house" and the "seaside" in Matt. 13:1 carry deeper, significant meanings (in their symbolic usage in Scripture) than just being used in a mere statement of fact. The "house" in this passage points to the same "house" which Christ referred to in Matt. 23:38 - the *house of Israel*; and the "sea" in Scripture is peculiarly related to the *Gentiles* (Jonah 1:15; Rev. 13:1). Within the symbolism used, Jesus (for the first time) departed from the group to which He came (Israel), went to an entirely separate group (the Gentiles), and began to speak in parables. Thus, the first mention of parables in Matthew's gospel relates them peculiarly to the *Gentiles*, not to Israel (although Christ later in the chapter went back into the house and uttered three additional parables).

The events of chapter thirteen immediately followed the events of chapter twelve, occurring on "The same day" (v. 1). The events of chapter twelve set the stage for and reveal the reason why Christ departed the house, went down by the seaside, and began to speak in parables. It was in chapter twelve that the Scribes and Pharisees committed what is called the "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit", attributing to Satan the power by which Christ performed His miraculous works. And this was a sin of such magnitude that there would be no forgiveness, "neither in this world ['age'], neither in the world to come ['the age to come' (the Messianic Era)]" (vs. 24-32). It is here that, for all practical purposes, the kingdom of the heavens was taken from Israel, although the announcement was not given until after Christ rode into Jerusalem (presenting Himself as Israel's King) immediately preceding His crucifixion (21:5-11, 15, 18, 19, 33-43). In like manner, the *condemnation* of the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees and the announced *desolation* of the house of Israel (23:1-39) also do not appear until a later time in Matthew's gospel, although the events depicted in chapter twelve likewise anticipate these things.

In chapter twelve, the Pharisees, seeking ways to destroy Christ, held a council against Him (v. 14). Jesus, knowing this, withdrew to another place and continued performing miraculous signs having to do with the *kingdom* (v. 15; Isa. 35:1, 5, 6). Christ healed a man who was both "blind and dumb", and "*all the people were amazed, and said, 'Is not this the son of David?'*" (vs. 22, 23). The construction of the Greek text (using the particle *meti*) shows both confusion and negative feelings on their part, undoubtedly brought about by the previous actions of the Scribes and Pharisees. The Pharisees at this point (the Scribes were also included [Mark 3:22]) seized the opportunity to cast reproach upon both Christ and His work by attributing the manifested power to Satan. This brought about Christ's pronouncement of judgment (vs. 31, 32) and His refusal to reveal any additional sign other than that of "the prophet Jonah" (vs. 38-40).

It is here that the great turning point in the ministry of Christ occurred. "The sign of Jonah" pointed to *Calvary*, not the Kingdom. Christ then alluded to judgment about to befall the nation (vs. 41-45), anticipating the announcement of *desolation* in Matt. 23:38. Then, for the first time, Christ departed the

house and went down by the *seaside*, as revealed in chapter thirteen. It was not long after these events that Christ announced, "...*I will build my Church*" (16:18) - the announcement of the bringing into existence of an entity separate and distinct from Israel, the "*one new man*" in Christ. The Cross, foreshadowed by "the sign of Jonah", then came into full view (16:21; 17:9 [Luke 9:31], 22, 23; 20:17-19; 21:39). All of this anticipated the kingdom being taken from Israel, the house of Israel being left desolate, the occurrence of the events of Calvary, and the Church being brought into existence.

Parables, within their proper setting in Matthew's gospel, are peculiarly connected with Christ's departure from Israel, with the Gentiles in view. And, although the Church is comprised of those taken from both Israel and the Gentile nations, its association within the framework of that which is in view is with the *Gentiles* rather than with Israel. In the types, Joseph and Moses both took *Gentile brides* in the far countries; and in verses such as Acts 15:14 and Rom. 11:25, the Gentiles come into full view through God *visiting* "the Gentiles" and God bringing about the *fullness* "of the Gentiles." Thus, it is only natural that one finds parables in the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse *alone*, and this is a distinguishing characteristic of that section.

2. *Salvation and Judgment*

Salvation in the *Jewish* section has to do with physical deliverance, and the judgment associated with this deliverance is the Great Tribulation here upon earth; salvation in the *Christian* section has to do with the soul/life, and the judgment associated with this deliverance is the Judgment Seat of Christ in the heavens; salvation in the *Gentile* section has to do with entrance into the kingdom (as subjects), and the judgment associated with Gentiles being allowed to enter the kingdom surrounds the Son of Man seated on "the throne of his glory" here upon the earth.

a) Jewish Section: This section begins with Israel in the Great Tribulation; and it is concluded by the return of Israel's Messiah at the end of the Great Tribulation, followed by the regathering of the Jewish people from a worldwide dispersion.

Those who heed Jesus' command - "*Let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains*"- will be safely sheltered and supernaturally protected during the last 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation:

Revelation 12:6

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Those who endure "unto the end [the end of the Great Tribulation]" will be "saved [physically delivered out of this time of trouble]" (v. 13). They will comprise a portion of the ones regathered back to the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the end of the Great Tribulation. *All is Jewish throughout.*

b) Christian Section: This section begins with the parable of the fig tree, having to do with the rebirth of the Israeli nation in the latter days of the present age, preceding the Great Tribulation. The reappearance of Israel as a nation is the main sign which Scripture provides showing that the end of the age is near at hand. In like manner to the fig tree, when Israel begins to put forth leaves (note: no fruit, *leaves* only [Matt. 21:18, 19]), "*know that it [lit. 'He' (Christ)] is near, even at the doors*" (v. 33).

The Church of the Firstborn will be removed from the earth to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ preceding the Great Tribulation, and each Christian will render an account concerning "the things done in

his body" (2Cor. 5:10). *Responsibility* (present), *accountability* (future), and the *kingdom* (future) form the main thrust of the subject matter throughout the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse. Further, the "kingdom of the heavens" is the matter at hand (25:1), *something which can no longer pertain to Israel at this point in Matthew's gospel* (Matt. 21:43). *All is Christian throughout.*

c) *Gentile Section:* This section begins with the Son of Man seated on the "throne of his glory" upon the earth. All the Gentiles who survive the Great Tribulation will be gathered before Christ and separated into two groups - the *sheep* and the *goats*. They will then be judged in two separate judgments, and judgment in both instances will be on the basis of their treatment of Christ's "brethren [the Jewish people]" during the Great Tribulation. Entrance into the kingdom will await the sheep, and hell will await the goats. *All is Gentile throughout.*

3. The Time Interval

The time during which events occur is completely different in each section. In the *Jewish* section, time during and immediately following the Great Tribulation is in view; in the *Christian* section, time preceding the Great Tribulation is in view; and in the *Gentile* section, time following the completion of God's dealings with Israel at the end of the Great Tribulation is in view.

a) *Jewish Section:* God's resumption of His dealings with Israel awaits the completion of His present dealings with the Church. Israel has been set aside, and God will not deal with Israel on a national basis again until He has completed His purpose for the present dispensation. Then God will turn to Israel once again.

The time during which God will resume His dealings with Israel actually lies within the scope of Daniel's prophecy of the "Seventy Weeks" (Dan. 9:24-27). One Week (one Seven) - the last seven years of the prophecy - awaits fulfillment. This period, which begins with the ratifying of the covenant between the man of sin and Israel (Dan. 9:27), comprises that future time during which God will deal with Israel once again; and this period is the coming seven-year Great Tribulation. God will then complete His dealings with Israel immediately following the Great Tribulation at the time of His return. Their blindness will be lifted, the house of Israel will no longer lie desolate, and the nation will then realize the purpose for its very existence - exercising the *rights belonging to the firstborn* in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

b) *Christian Section:* This section begins at a time before the Great Tribulation and actually encompasses the entire present dispensation. *The Great Tribulation is not in view at all*; and this must, of necessity, be the case because Christians have little to do with this time. The Great Tribulation is the "time of Jacob's trouble", not the Christians'. The matter of a firstfruits, pretribulation rapture of Christians is dealt with in the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse only in the sense that the removal of those *alive* belonging to the Church of the First-Born (this does not include *all* Christians) to appear before the Lord in judgment occurs apart from any mention of the Great Tribulation. Related Scripture, of course, reveals why this is the case, and this important doctrine will be examined later in this book. The Great Tribulation lies beyond the firstfruits rapture and has to do with events here *upon the earth after* these Christians have been removed; and judgment awaiting these Christians, following their removal from the earth, will occur *in the heavens*. A pretribulation, firstfruits rapture of these Christians is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture (1 Thess. 5:1-11; Heb. 11:5; Rev. 4:1-2), and Matt. 24:32-25:30 must be understood in this same light.

If you are among those who do not believe in a pretribulation rapture, you will miss the vital sense of what Christ is teaching here. I encourage you to follow this line of reasoning with an open mind – perhaps what follows in this chapter and in the rest of this book will at least give you food for thought. I am well aware that a mindset, once established, is very difficult to overcome; I admit that I, too, am subject to this fault inherent in our human nature. I have had to revise my doctrine from past thinking to conform to the truth of Scripture as it has been revealed to me, and of course I am well aware that my doctrine, even now, is not infallible. Let Scripture be the judge.

The subject matter at hand in the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse is *faithfulness* or *unfaithfulness* of the Lord's servants during His time of absence, with a *future reckoning* and the *coming kingdom* in view. The time during which the Lord's servants exhibit either faithfulness or unfaithfulness covers the entire present dispensation. The time of reckoning will then occur at the conclusion of the dispensation and would appear to precede the beginning of the Seven Year Tribulation upon earth for some, and on into this Seven Year period for the rest.

The ratifying of the covenant between the man of sin and Israel is the event which marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation (rather than the removal of the Church, as is often taught). It appears clear from events revealed in Revelation, chapters four and five that an interval of time may exist between the removal of the Church of the Firstborn and the beginning of the Great Tribulation (events at the beginning of chapter four point to the removal of the Church of the Firstborn [vs. 1, 2], but the Great Tribulation does not begin until events depicted at the beginning of chapter six [vs. 1, 2]; and events in chapters four and five *must* occur before events in chapter six can occur. The "Lamb" *must first be shown worthy* to open the seals [5:1-7; 6:1]). Since judgment must begin with Christians *first* (1 Peter 4:17), before progressing to Israel, it would appear that such will occur *preceding* the Great Tribulation. That is, from comparing Scripture with Scripture, it would appear that God will partially complete His dealings with certain Christians before He turns to deal with Israel once again. This would necessitate events at the Judgment Seat of Christ in heaven being initiated *before* events of the Great Tribulation begin upon earth. Of course, there is some overlapping which occurs between the dispensations, just as there was when Christ first appeared to Israel with the offer of the Kingdom of Heaven.

c) Gentile Section: A huge portion of the Gentiles upon the earth who enter into the Great Tribulation will be killed during that seven-year period. Rev. 6:8 and 9:15-18 alone reveal one-half the population of the earth being killed during this time. Then, there are verses showing unrevealed numbers being slain (6:4; 8:9, 11; 11:5, 13; 12:16; 13:15), followed by the Battle of Armageddon at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation, where blood will run "even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs [about 180 miles]" (14:19, 20; 19:17-21; Isa. 63:1-6). The judgment of the Gentiles, as revealed in Matthew, chapter twenty-five, will occur following all these things. This judgment has to do with *living Gentiles alone*. No resurrection is in view. These are Gentiles who survive the judgments of the Great Tribulation and are alive on earth when Israel's Messiah returns; none of these will have taken the mark of the beast.

Concluding Remarks:

The *kingdom* is the focal point toward which the entire program of God has been moving since prior to the creation of Adam; and the Olivet Discourse comprises a dissertation of God's terminal dealings with the three divisions of mankind - Jew, Christian, and Gentile - *immediately preceding* and *leading into* this kingdom.

The *Jewish* section has to do with Israel in the Great Tribulation, followed by the return of Israel's Messiah and the regathering of Israel, *anticipating the kingdom*; the *Christian* section has to do with the present faithfulness or unfaithfulness of Christians and the coming Judgment Seat, *anticipating the kingdom*; and the *Gentile* section has to do with all the living Gentiles being dealt with immediately following God's completion of His dealings with Israel, *anticipating the kingdom*.

The focus of this book is primarily on Christians diligently striving to receive Salvation of the Soul at the Judgment Seat of Christ. For this reason, only the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse will be examined in detail. In order to capture in one place the connectedness of this section, both as to the main theme (the Lord is coming) and the time frame (all centered around the time of His coming for His saints – in the air), please study carefully the summary on the following page. It would be helpful if you referred back to it as the details of each section are given.

The Christian Portion of the Olivet Discourse

The following is a broad overview of the above named portion:

Parable of the Fig Tree

This is the sign of His *soon* coming. When Israel comes forth again as a nation – the generation that sees this shall not pass away until the Lord comes. (This happened on May 14, 1948.)

Imperative – no one knows the exact day or hour of His coming. Therefore, Watch! (implied).

As were the days of Noah and Lot

Everyone will be going about the daily business of living; very few will know of the impending judgment. The emphasis falls on the "not knowing" of the impending judgment – not the judgment itself. Most (and certainly all the Gentiles) will be caught by complete surprise.

Imperative – as a snare shall it come on the whole earth. Therefore, Watch! (implied).

One shall be taken, and the other left

This is His coming (in the air) - the firstfruits rapture; some will be taken, and some left. This is a warning to all Christians, certainly, but *ultimately it will actually apply only to those Christians who are alive at the time of this rapture*. (Those dead in Christ can no longer watch!)

Imperative – Watch, therefore! – (explicit warning)

Who then is a faithful and wise servant –

This one (alive) shall be taken in rapture - he was watching (when He cometh shall find so doing.) Only a live person can be "doing" in the sense of the context when the Lord comes.

Imperative – He shall be made ruler over all his Lord's goods.

But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming

This one (alive) was not watching. He thought the Lord would delay His coming.

Imperative – The Lord comes in an hour that he is not aware of – surprise! He shall be appointed his portion with the unbelievers (he is left to endure part of the Great Tribulation with the unbelievers). (Implied imperative – don't let this happen to you!)

Parable of the Ten Virgins

This is how the determination is made of "one shall be taken, the other left" – whether or not they were "ready". Again, this can only apply to those Christians *alive* at the time of this rapture.

Imperative – Watch therefore (explicit), for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh! (Implied – be ready).

Parable of the Talents

This is a picture of the Judgment Seat of Christ at which time all of the saved are judged – both the dead in Christ and the living. It shows the basis of judgment that determines who will enter the kingdom, and who will be excluded. It encompasses the entire period of His "parousia" (His coming) – from the Firstfruits Rapture until His physical return to earth.

The Fig Tree

Matthew 24:32-36

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it [He] is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

The *Christian section* of the Olivet Discourse begins with the parable of the fig tree. This section (24:32-25:30) encompasses an entirely different period of time than the preceding *Jewish section* (24:4-31) or the following *Gentile section* (25:31-46). "Time" in the Christian section begins at a point *before* the Great Tribulation. Verses thirty-two through thirty-nine pertain to the signs of the times and the manner of the Lord's return; and beginning in verse forty, the remainder of the section pertains to the Lord's dealings with His servants (at a time *before* the Great Tribulation) and with judgment (The Judgment Seat of Christ) awaiting these same servants when the Lord returns for His Own. *All* of this is then shown to be *with a view to the kingdom which follows*.

It was Philip Mauro who many years ago said, "We greatly fear the consequences of the tendency observable in certain quarters to treat the millennial kingdom of the Son as a thing of little interest to the saints of God." The coming reign of Christ is the climactic event of the ages pertaining to man in relation to this present earth. All Scripture, after some fashion, moves toward this event; and to ignore this fact can only prove detrimental to any sound method of Biblical study.

I would add to this statement that it is not only detrimental to sound Bible study, but it also can be hugely detrimental to the Christian's future. I pray you will not take this subject lightly.

In the Jewish section of the Olivet Discourse, the kingdom of Christ follows God's dealings with Israel during and after the Great Tribulation; the kingdom of Christ likewise follows God's dealings with Christians during and at the end of the present age in the Christian section; and the same is true concerning God's dealings with the Gentiles at the end of the Great Tribulation in the Gentile section. The reign of Christ over the earth is the *consummative event* in view throughout the Olivet Discourse. God's dealings with the Jews during and following the Great Tribulation, His dealings with Christians during and at the end of the present age, and His dealings with the Gentiles at the end of the Great Tribulation are *ALL* intimately related to the *Kingdom* which follows these dealings.

The Christian section of the Olivet Discourse pertains mainly to the *time* set aside (present dispensation) during which 1) the *many sons* of Heb. 2:10 are being called out and 2) to the *judgment* awaiting these sons at the end of the age. Israel has been set aside for a period of time which will last approximately 2,000 years, and during this time God is calling out the "companions" who are to occupy the throne as "joint-heirs" with His Son during the coming age (Rom. 8:17-23; Heb. 1:9; 3:14). And these individuals must be dealt with at the end of this present age, with their calling in view. *This is what the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse is all about.*

First though, the *signs of the times* and the *manner of the Lord's return* are dealt with by attention called to the parable of the fig tree and the days of Noah (vs. 32-39). Christians cannot know the *day* or the *hour*; God has reserved these specifics unto Himself (v. 36). But Christians can know when the *time is near* (v. 33) through the *signs of the times* (vs. 32-34, 37); and Christians, as the Israelites in the previous section (vs. 23-28), have also been given information concerning the *manner of the Lord's return* (vs. 37-39).

Trees in Scripture

"Trees" are used in Scripture to symbolize *national powers*. In Judges 9:8-15, a passage which relates the oldest known parable in the world, "trees" represent *nations* which sought to elect a king to reign over them. Dan. 4:10-12 refers to a vision of a "tree in the midst of the earth", which is revealed to represent *Babylon* (vs. 20-22). The Lord used trees on more than one occasion during His earthly ministry within this same framework in order to teach His disciples great spiritual truths concerning the Church, Israel, and the Gentile nations. He referred to the "mustard seed" which germinated, experienced an unnatural growth, and became a *tree*. He later referred to the "fig tree" on several occasions, and on one of these occasions He referred to "all the trees" in conjunction with the fig tree (Matt. 13:31, 32; 21:19, 20; 24:32; Mark 11:13, 14, 20, 21; 13:28; Luke 13:6-9; 21:29).

The manner in which the Lord used the "fig tree" in Matt. 21:19, 20 and Mark 11:13, 14, 20, 21 (see also Luke 13:6-9) clearly reveals that He was referring to *Israel*. Contextually no other conclusion can be drawn. And His subsequent use of the "fig tree" in the Olivet Discourse must be understood in this same sense, for the "fig tree" had not only previously been singled out to represent *Israel* (in line with the fact that trees are used in Scripture to represent nations) but the textual setting and things stated about the fig tree in the Olivet Discourse preclude any other interpretation. In this same light, "all the trees" in Luke 21:29 would have to represent *Gentile nations*.

1. The Fig Tree Cursed

Christ "*came unto his own, and his own received him not*" (John 1:11). *His Own things* to which He came had to do with those things rightfully belonging to Him: the throne of David, His Own throne, the domain over which He was to rule, etc. He offered to *His Own people* (the nation of Israel) that which pertained to *His Own things*, and He was rejected. As a consequence, Israel was in turn rejected. God set Israel aside while He called out a separate and distinct "nation", comprised of those who were neither Jew nor Gentile, to be the recipient of that which Israel rejected.

Matt. 21:1-11 records the account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as Israel's King in fulfillment of Zech. 9:9. This was the final, climactic offer of *His Own things* to *His Own people*. And the continued rejection by the "chief priests and scribes" (v. 15) brought about the cursing of the fig tree (vs. 18, 19), the

utterance of two parables pertaining to Israel and their unbelief (vs. 28-42), and the announcement that those things which had been offered to and rejected by the Jewish people would be taken from them and given to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (v. 43).

Note the place which the cursing of the fig tree occupies in this entire sequence. It appears *immediately after* Christ's final, climactic rejection by Israel and *immediately before* Christ announced that the "kingdom of God" [*i.e.* that part of the kingdom which had been proffered - the 'kingdom of the heavens'] would be taken from Israel. Understood contextually, the symbolism involved in the cursing of the fig tree becomes a relatively simple matter to ascertain.

Christ came to the fig tree seeking fruit and found none. A curse was then pronounced upon the tree (in relation to bearing fruit): "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever" [*lit.* 'for an age'] (Matt. 21:19). The significance, of course, is evident. The curse on the fig tree centered around its *fruitless* condition; and Christ's dealings with Israel at this point in His ministry centered around the nation's *fruitless* condition. Christ came to Israel seeking fruit, found none, and Israel was set aside for an age. The "fig tree", *Israel*, is to bear no fruit during the present age. Israel is presently under a curse. During the coming age, however, after the curse has been lifted and after Israel has been restored, fruit will appear on the tree. In fact, restored Israel will be very fruitful (note *Sarah*, who was barren [Gen. 23:1, 2], and *Keturah*, who was very fruitful [Gen. 25:1, 2], within the overall framework of the typological teachings drawn from Gen. 21-25).

The fig tree which Christ cursed had *leaves only*. Mark, in his account, adds a statement not found in Matthew's gospel: "...for the time of figs was not yet" (Mark 11:13). It was not time for fruit to appear on either the tree which Christ cursed or the nation which the tree represented. It was too early in the season for the fig tree to bear fruit (although "leaves" portended *fruit*, for the appearance of fruit normally preceded or accompanied the appearance of leaves), and it was too early in God's septenary arrangement of time for Israel to bear fruit.

A) Fig Leaves in Genesis

The fig tree with leaves only, representing Israel in the same condition, should be understood in the light of the first mention of fig leaves in Scripture. Adam and Eve, following the fall, suddenly found themselves in a naked condition and tried to cover their nakedness with *fig-leaf* aprons (Gen. 3:7). It is apparent that the *fig-leaf* aprons constituted their efforts to replace the *covering of glory* which they lost at the time they partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God is clothed "with light as with a garment" (Psa. 104:2), and man was created in the "image" and "likeness" of God (Gen. 1:26-28). Man, at the time of his creation, was apparently ensnathed in a *covering of glory*, which had to do with the presence of God at all times. This covering was lost at the time of the fall, separating man from God, revealing the primary meaning of the word "death" (Gen. 2:17).

From the point Adam sinned until the present time there has existed in Scripture what could be called "the fallen image", a condition wrought through Adam's fall which will one day be rectified. This fact will also reveal what is wrong with man's body of "flesh" today. "Flesh" is presently spoken of as *sinful*. We read about the "works of the flesh" as opposed to the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16-23; Rom. 8:8; 13:14; Eph. 2:3), or about Christ coming to this earth in the "likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). There is really nothing wrong with *flesh* per se. Man was created with a body of flesh, and redeemed man will possess a body of flesh throughout not only time (the millennial age) but eternity (the ages beyond). The problem

exists where there is a body of flesh *without the covering of glory*, a problem which has not always existed in the past and will not always exist in the future.

Christ coming in "the likeness of sinful flesh" is a reference to His appearance on this earth *without the covering of glory*; and except for the brief appearance after a different fashion on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8), He lived on this earth and died at Golgotha apart from this covering. He was stripped of His garments, exposing the uncovered flesh, and arrayed as a mock King immediately preceding Calvary. As He stood there in this array, apart from His glory, He was spat upon, mocked, and smitten with a reed (representing a scepter, which had been placed in His hand). He was then stripped of His garments again at Golgotha, exposing the uncovered flesh, bearing the sins of the world "in his own body" (Matt. 27:27-31; John 19:23; 1 Peter 2:24). The ignominy and shame of these experiences cry out for the same scenes which witnessed His sufferings and humiliation to also witness His glory and exaltation.

B) Fig Leaves in the Gospel Accounts

Now, what do these things have in common with the *fig tree* being cursed by Christ at the termination of His earthly ministry? What does the mention of *fig leaves* in connection with the fall of Adam have to do with Israel typified by a fig tree with leaves only?

First, note the reason for Adam's creation. Adam was created to supplant Satan as the ruler over this earth, and Eve was removed from Adam's body to reign as consort queen with him (Gen. 1:26-28). Satan, through sin, had been disqualified as the earth's ruler (Isa. 14:13-14); and an entirely new creation, created in the image and likeness of God, was brought on the scene to assume the scepter. However, Satan, knowing this, brought about the First Adam's fall and his resulting disqualification to assume the position for which he had been created. Thus, Satan continued to reign, even though disqualified to so do. (This reveals a principle of Biblical government. An incumbent, even though disqualified, rejected by God, continues to hold office until he is actually replaced [note also *Saul and David* in this respect, or the antitype, *Satan and Christ*].)

Second, note the reason that Israel was brought into existence and established in the position of God's "firstborn son" (Exo. 4:22, 23). Israel, *a special creation* of God (Isa. 43:1), was called out of Egypt under Moses to exercise the rights of primogeniture in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Israel was to be the ruling nation on earth and the nation through which all the Gentile nations would be blessed. (Israel, as Abraham's seed, was also made the repository for heavenly promises and blessings. These promises and blessings, though, were taken from the nation following the cursing of the fig tree and are presently being offered to a separate and distinct group of people who are neither Jew nor Gentile.)

In connection with Israel's calling, the *glory* which man lost at the time of the fall was, after a fashion, restored to man at Mt. Sinai. Rather than this glory abiding directly with man as preceding the fall though, an earthly tabernacle, patterned after an existing tabernacle in the heavens, was constructed to house the glory. (Two things become evident at this point in Scripture: 1) No restoration of this aspect of Edenic conditions can exist so long as man resides in a body of death, and 2) the glory is intimately associated with man's rule over the earth.)

The day came though, centuries later, because of disobedience, when this *glory* was taken from Israel. Shortly after Nebuchadnezzar first carried away Jewish captives into Babylon, God removed His glory; and this glory was not to be restored until that time when Israel would be placed under a new covenant

and occupy the position portended by the glory. Between these two times the nation remains as Adam following the fall - possessing nothing but *fig leaves*.

Third, note that the cursing of the fig tree was a miraculous work. It was actually one-of-a-kind among miracles which Christ performed during His earthly ministry. All Christ's other miraculous works dealt with *deliverance*, but this one dealt with *judgment*. Miraculous works performed by Christ (or for that matter, miraculous works performed by individuals anywhere else in Scripture) were all peculiarly related to the *theocracy*.

Now, tying this all together, one should be able to clearly see that all these things are intimately associated with the *government of this earth*. Adam was created to rule and reign; but because of sin, the *glory* (the enswathement covering Adam's and Eve's bodies, associated with God's presence) had departed, and nothing was left but *fig leaves*. It was the same with Israel. Because of sin, the *glory* (the presence of God among His people, dwelling in the tabernacle and later the temple) had departed, and nothing was left but *fig leaves*. The time when the glory will be restored and fruit will reside on the tree is yet future. It will occur when man is brought back into a realization of that which was lost in Adam; this awaits the coming age.

2. The Budding of the Fig Tree

Though the fig tree is cursed for the duration of the present age, the tree is to reappear as it was seen in Matt. 21:19 - with leaves, but no fruit - near the end of the age. This will occur prior to the time the curse is lifted, the glory is restored, and fruit correspondingly appears on the tree. *The reappearance of the fig tree, possessing leaves only*, is *THE SIGN* which Scripture provides to show that the end of the age is very near.

In history, Israel continued to exist as a nation, in a fruitless condition, for forty years following the inception of the Church. Then the tree was cut down. Titus and his Roman legions marched into Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and terminated Israel's national existence through destroying the temple, the city, and subsequently scattering the Jewish people throughout the nations of the earth. (Note: It was Israel's "national" identity - which had *nothing* to do with the Israelites' "racial" identity - that was terminated at this time. The Jewish people, since the time of the inception of the nation in Egypt during the days of Moses, have *never* ceased to possess a "racial" identity.)

From the time that the tree was cut down, until modern times, the Jewish people existed apart from a national identity. They became associated with the Gentile nations of the earth into which they had been scattered. But an entirely different situation exists in the Middle East today. There is once again an Israeli nation inhabiting part of the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, resulting from a Zionistic movement which began during the closing years of the nineteenth century. On May 14, 1948, a nation which had not existed for almost nineteen hundred years appeared once again. The *fig tree, with leaves only*, was again present.

The *fig tree with leaves only* was present for the first forty years of the present dispensation (until 70 AD), and the *fig tree with leaves only* will be present for a comparable length of time towards the end of this present dispensation (though not necessarily exactly forty years). Israel was removed from the scene at the beginning of the Christian dispensation to allow God *to take out of the Gentiles* "a people for his name" (Acts 15:14); and Israel has reappeared on the scene once again near the end of the dispensation for two reasons: 1) *as a sign* that God is almost finished with His present work among the Gentiles, and 2) *to set*

the stage for God's concluding work among His people within the scope of Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, after the Church has been removed.

In Matthew's and Mark's accounts of the Olivet Discourse the references to the fig tree putting forth leaves are identical (Matt. 24:32; Mark 13:28). Luke's account though is different. Luke states, "Behold *the fig tree, and all the trees*; when *they* now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand" (21:29, 30). Luke refers not only to the appearance of the "fig tree", representing *Israel*, but to the appearance of "all the trees", representing *Gentile nations* as well.

That which is in view insofar as the Gentile nations are concerned can only be a reference to what occurred in the world during the years immediately following the re-establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948. Smaller non-independent Gentile nations in that part of the world, particularly across Africa, began to gain their independence (*e.g.*, to name a few, Libya in 1952; Morocco and Sudan in 1956; Ghana in 1957; Guinea in 1958; Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and the Ivory Coast in 1960; Kenya in 1963; and Zambia in 1964). The "key" which properly fit the lock, allowing the door to be opened, was *the establishment of Israel as a national entity*. Once this was accomplished - once the fig tree with its leaves appeared again - the time was at hand for the other trees to shoot forth also.

This Generation

The emphasis in the parable of the fig tree is really not upon the barren tree itself but upon one's attitude toward the Lord's return when he sees the tree with its leaves, as it presently exists in the Middle East. Christians are admonished to *know* by the very appearance of this nation in such a condition (this *particular* national entity, with no glory and no fruit - *leaves only*) that concluding events of the age, immediately preceding the Lord's return, have begun to occur.

Along with the reappearance of the fig tree with its leaves, the Lord called attention to "all these things" (vs. 33, 34). It is actually through seeing "all these things" that Christians can know that the Lord is "near, even at the doors" (v. 33). It is apparent that the Lord was not referring back to all the revealed events in the verses preceding the budding of the fig tree (vs. 4-31), for these things, aside from having to do with events during the Great Tribulation, include the Lord's return itself at the end of the Great Tribulation. The reference would seem to be back to verse three of this chapter (also v. 8), in line with the budding of the fig tree in verse thirty-two and the return of the Lord for His Own as taught in subsequent verses in the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse. That is, an Israeli nation presently exists in the Middle East, and the stage is rapidly being set for conditions which will transpire during the Great Tribulation, after the Church of the Firstborn has been removed. "All these things" can only refer to preparatory events which precede and anticipate the Great Tribulation; and *these* are events whereby Christians can know that the Lord's return is *very near*.

The *budding of the fig tree* is the event which sets things in motion. Preparatory events worldwide then follow in immediate and rapid succession, anticipating the succeeding events of the Great Tribulation as revealed in Matt. 24:4-31. And, according to verse thirty-four, the generation which sees these things occur - from the budding of the fig tree forward - will be the *same* generation living on earth when the events of the Great Tribulation overtake the earth-dwellers. In other words, the generation which witnessed Israel's re-establishment as a nation on May 14, 1948, along with subsequent preparatory events for the Great Tribulation, will be the *same* generation still alive when all the end-time events in verses four through thirty-one occur.

(Some expositors understand the word in the Greek text translated "generation" [*genea*] to mean "race" or "nation" in this passage and, through this means, teach that this verse is a reference to Israel being preserved as a nation through present and future times. The word *genea* could mean "race" or "nation", but a reference to Israel after this fashion is not at all what is being taught in this passage; nor is a reference to "race" or "nation" the way this word is used other places in the three synoptic gospels [Matt. 1:17; 11:16; 12:39, 41, 42, 45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; Mark 8:12, 38; 9:19; Luke 1:48, 50; 7:31; 9:41; 11:29-32, 50, 51; 16:8; 17:25]. The reference in Matt. 24:34 is to a *generation of individuals*, not a "race" or "nation.")

The preceding is the reason I can say with certainty that there are presently a great number of Christians on the earth who will never die physically. Those belonging to the Church of the Firstborn will be removed from the earth alive when the Lord returns for His Own, in the antitype of the experiences of Enoch and Elijah (1Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). On the other hand, I can say with the same certainty that there are also millions of individuals (Jews and Gentiles) presently living on the earth who will experience the reign of Antichrist and the horrors of the Great Tribulation. Most of these individuals will die, but many will survive the Great Tribulation and be living when the Lord returns to the earth at the end of this period.

That Day and Hour

Christians, through the signs of the times, can know the nearness of the Lord's return; and the Lord has seen fit to supply His people with an abundance of information in this realm. However, Christians do not know the exact day and hour. These specifics are reserved for Deity only (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32).

Within this framework, some Christians have been disturbed by the way Mark 13:32 reads (Matt. 24:36 also reads this same way in several of the Greek manuscripts and is so translated in most later English versions [*ref.* ASV, NASB, NIV]): "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father", leaving some with the thought that even Christ Himself does not know the day and hour of His return (which, of course, would reflect upon His deity).

Seeing this problem, some expositors have called attention to self-imposed limitations in connection with Christ's incarnation and appearance "in the likeness of sinful flesh" on the earth. Though viewing the matter after this fashion may seemingly solve the problem, the text actually teaches something quite different. Correctly translated, the text is really a direct allusion to the deity of Christ, showing to the ones being addressed that He was *exactly* Who He claimed to be. Matt. 24:36 also teaches the same truth with the addition of the words, "neither the Son", for the Greek manuscripts containing these words read the same way as the Greek text of Mark 13:32 reads.

The Greek words *ei me*, appearing in and translated "but" in both Matt. 24:36 and Mark 13:32, are the key to a correct understanding of these passages. Possibly the best comments on the matter were those given years ago by Archbishop Trench as he was expounding on the words *ei me* in Mark 13:32: "The late Archbishop Trench, one of the greatest authorities on words, when lecturing to a London college, called attention to the fact that in the last part of this verse ['but the Father'], the two Greek words *ei me*, translated 'but,' really mean 'if not.' The Greek word *ei* equals 'if,' and the Greek word *me* equals 'not.' He called attention to the fact that any good Greek Concordance would reveal the same. Archbishop Trench understood this verse to mean, 'If I were *not* God as well as man, even I would not know the day nor the hour.'

Mark 13:32 corrected will read thus: 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son *if not* the Father.' In other words, Jesus says that if He were not the Father He would not know. We have the same truth in John 9:33 with the same two Greek words, *ei me*, translated, 'if not' - 'If this man were *not* of God, he could do nothing.

Thus, Matt. 24:36 and Mark 13:32, rather than showing self-imposed limitations of the Son, or a non-deity status of the Son (as claimed by certain cults), are two of the most straightforward verses in the New Testament bearing witness to the Son's true identity. He is *one* with the Father, possessing the same attributes. If He were not God, He would not know the day and hour of His return; but He is God, and He consequently *does* know."

Concluding Remarks:

Israel's present appearance with *fig leaves* anticipates the nation's soon-coming future appearance with the *glory* restored. Israel though must *first* pass through her greatest time of suffering, the Great Tribulation, lying just ahead. *Then*, the nation will realize a calling which has been delayed for millenniums. *The glory and theocracy will be restored, and fruit will appear on the tree.*

What *time* is it on God's prophetic calendar? With "all these things" present, *it's much later than many care to think or admit!*

So Shall Also The Coming of the Son of Man Be

Matthew 24:37-39

But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt. 24:37-39).

The parable of the fig tree and reference to the days of Noah, beginning the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse, sets the tenor of thought for *all* which follows. *Four* main parts follow, and each begins in a similar fashion, referring back to these opening verses: "Then..." (24:40-44); "Who then..." (24:45-51); "Then..." (25:1-13); "For it is just as a man... [literal rendering, referring back to the parable of the ten virgins in vs. 1-13, and consequently back to the opening verses of the section]" (25:14-30).

The Christian section opens after a similar fashion to the way the Jewish section closes - referring to the "coming of the Son of Man" (vs. 27, 37, and 39). This coming, in its overall scope (in both the Jewish and Christian sections), includes not only His coming at the end of the Great Tribulation to deal with Israel and the Gentile nations, but also His coming before the Great Tribulation to deal with Christians. The "coming of the Son of Man" in the Jewish section pertains to the former (events at the end of the Great Tribulation), and the "coming of the Son of Man" in the Christian section pertains to the latter (events preceding the Great Tribulation). These two periods, spoken of under the overall scope of *the Lord's coming*, are separated by at least seven years. His *parousia* covers the entire period from His coming in secret "in the air" until His coming physically to set foot upon the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation.

The parable of the fig tree concerns itself with the signs of the times, but a central truth brought out in the Lord's subsequent reference to the days of Noah is also very evident in this parable. And that truth

concerns a warning which is prevalent throughout Scripture: *Things as we know them today are not going to continue on and on indefinitely*. The budding of the fig tree and corresponding subsequent events show that God is about to *once again* intervene in the affairs of man, and reference to the days of Noah illustrates this same truth.

By reference to Noah's day the Lord drew an analogy between events preceding the Flood (not the Flood itself) and events which will precede the coming of the Son of Man. "As it was...so shall it be..." (Luke 17:26). The world during Noah's day was following a specific course, and the world during the days immediately preceding Christ's return will be following the same course. The world was (during Noah's day) and will be (during days immediately preceding Christ's return) busily engaged in certain pursuits of life, *oblivious to any thought of the Lord's intervention in man's affairs*.

Preceding the Flood, the people were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, *until* the day that Noah entered into the ark" (v. 38). In a parallel passage, the Lord singled out similar pursuits engaged in by those living in the postdiluvian world during the days of Lot. The people "did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded"; and these activities continued *until* "Lot went out of Sodom" (Luke 17:28, 29; vs. 26, 27).

It is evident that these pursuits of life are not meant as references to things evil in themselves, although the reference to marriage during Noah's day would include the cohabitation of the sons of God with the daughters of men (Gen. 6:4). The overall thought is drawn from normal pursuits of life engaged in by those in the world during Noah's day and Lot's day which will be engaged in by those in the world during the time immediately preceding the coming of the Son of Man.

It was not *what* the people were busily engaged in during Noah's (and Lot's) day, but rather *how* they were carrying on these activities that is in view. Note the words, "And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away" (Matt. 24:39). The people were going about their everyday activities, completely oblivious to the destruction which was about to occur. And the same conditions will prevail on earth immediately preceding Christ's return for the Church and the judgment which will follow. The world as it exists today, paralleling the world immediately preceding the Flood, knows nothing about impending judgment; and conditions will continue unchanged, with the people busily engaged in normal pursuits of life, until...

The world though cannot be expected to follow any other course. "The whole world lieth in wickedness [in the wicked one]" (1 John 5:19). Satan is the "god of this world [age]", and "all the gods of the nations are idols [*lit.* 'nothing'; the translators of the Septuagint Version used the Greek word *daimonia*, referring to demons]" (2Cor. 4:4; Psa. 96:5). The world is enmeshed in humanism, with its goals, aims, ambitions, aspirations, following a humanistic approach to all things in life. Thus, it is only natural for the world to pursue a pattern of life as given in the text.

The entire thought centers around a warning to Christians, revealed in the parallel passage in Luke's gospel:

Luke 21:34-35

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day [the day of the coming of the Son of man] come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth".

Christians, though engaged in many of the same normal pursuits of life as the world, are to govern their affairs after an entirely different fashion. They are to conduct their affairs within these pursuits of life after a manner which bespeaks their belief in that which has been revealed concerning the coming of the Son of Man.

A major problem exists when Christians ignore or neglect that which has been revealed and become caught up in the ways and affairs of the world (Heb. 2:1-3), for the world knows *nothing* of impending change wrought through Divine intervention; and Christians, through an association with the world after this fashion, will gradually find themselves assuming a very similar attitude. They will be lulled to sleep, and "that day" will come upon them in the *same manner* as it will come upon those of the world - "as a *snare*" [in a sudden, unexpected manner].

The coming of the Son of Man will "come upon" such Christians *unawares*, and they will not know what is about to occur until that time when it does occur. Just as those during the days of Noah did not know "until the flood came", many Christians during the coming day (because of their involvement with the world) will not know *until*.

Christians living *in* the world, but not *of* the world, must govern their lives after a fashion which bespeaks their belief in the revelation of God concerning Christ's return. Christ *will* return; and, although we do not know the exact day and hour, it has pleased the One Who reserved this knowledge unto Himself to reveal certain *signs of the times*. God has *not* left His people in darkness; and the admonition and warning of Scripture, in the light of that which God has revealed, is to "*Take heed...Watch...*"

1 Thessalonians 5:5-6

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

The Antediluvian World

Drawing from the text, "as in the days that were before the flood", a sharp contrast is revealed between *two individuals* and *the world at large* during antediluvian days. These two individuals, *Enoch* and *Noah*, believed God concerning impending judgment and governed their lives accordingly. The *world*, by contrast, was alienated from God and knew nothing about impending judgment (or refused to believe the prophets that judgment was coming).

Actually, Scripture records very little concerning Enoch, but that which is revealed speaks volumes. Four verses in Genesis (5:21-24), one verse in Hebrews (11:5), and two verses in Jude (vs. 14, 15) relate everything God wants man to know about Enoch.

More detail though is given concerning the life of Noah. Noah is the central figure in Scripture from his birth in Gen. 5:28 to his death in Gen. 9:29. Outside of this section in Genesis, Ezekiel mentions Noah (along with Daniel and Job) several times in connection with righteous living (14:14-20), and five different passages in the New Testament mention Noah in connection with the Flood (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26, 27; Heb. 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5). As in the verses about Enoch, so in the verses about Noah: everything which God wants man to know about Noah has been recorded.

1. From Adam to Noah

Following the creation and fall of Adam, "when men began to multiply on the face of the earth", Scripture records the beginning of a cohabitation of the "sons of God" with the "daughters of men" (Gen. 6:1-4). This was an intermarriage of fallen angels in the kingdom of Satan with female offspring from the lineage of Adam. Children resulting from this union formed the beginning of a corrupted human race, which was unquestionably an early, all-out effort by Satan to prevent the Seed of the Woman, man's Redeemer (Gen. 3:15), from ever making His appearance.

Satan's "goal" during Man's Day has always been, at any cost, *to retain his present position on the throne*. He brought about the fall of Adam - the one created to supplant him as the earth's ruler - in order to achieve this end. He then brought about the murder of Abel in an apparent attempt to thwart God's plans and purposes concerning the previously announced Redeemer. And the subsequent cohabitation of the sons of God with the daughters of men could only have had the same end in view - a planned ultimate corruption of the entire human race, seeking to prevent man's Redeemer from appearing and thus preventing man from ever occupying the position for which he had been created.

It is evident that the cohabitation of the sons of God with the daughters of men began very early in the history of the human race. Note the expression, "when men *began* to multiply on the face of the earth..." From what can be gleaned in the account, it is apparent that Satan let very little time elapse from the point he moved Cain to slay Abel until he made his move to bring about a corrupted human race. This act of Satan can be traced back to a point *near the very beginning* of procreation within the human race, during the early years of Adam's life, numerous centuries before the Flood.

The Flood occurred 1,656 years following the creation of Adam; and, in the light of Scripture, it would probably be fair to assume that Satan, at this time, had been at work to produce total corruption in the human race for at least one and one-half millenniums. The judgment of the Flood was God's way of doing away with and putting a stop to that which had occurred under Satan's direction.

Eight individuals, whose genealogies remained untainted by the cohabitation of the sons of God with the daughters of men (Gen. 6:9), were spared.

Genesis 6:9

These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

God directed Noah to build an ark to house himself, his wife, his three sons, and their wives, with a view to a new beginning following the Flood.

2. Two Genealogies

Scripture records two genealogies in the antediluvian world - the *line of Cain* (Gen. 4:17-22), and the *line of Seth* (Gen. 5:1-32). The lineage of Cain terminates with the seventh generation; but the lineage of Seth continues beyond that point, with the seventh from Adam (Enoch) being removed from the earth alive.

It is evident from the record that wickedness and corruption reached a pinnacle in the seventh generation of Cain's lineage. This generation ended in *violence* (Gen. 4:23; 5:5); and also "seven" is the number of *perfection*, showing the completeness of that which is in view. God waited until man's cup of iniquity had become full before stepping in and putting a stop to the matter (Gen. 15:16).

In the revealed chronological order of events in Genesis, nothing lies between the termination of Cain's lineage following seven generations and the subsequent judgment of the Flood. And the lesson which the Spirit of God would have us understand from this order is the fact that man in his violence and corruption will not be allowed to continue beyond the point indicated by the number "seven." This was true during Noah's day, and it remains just as true during the present day. A *complete period* within Man's Day ran its course in history, and judgment followed (the Flood); another *complete period* will also run its course during the present day, and judgment will once again follow (the Great Tribulation).

The lineage of Seth, though, reveals something entirely different. The seventh from Adam through this line was Enoch, a man who "walked with God", a man of *faith* (Gen 5:22; Heb. 11:5). And the lineage of Seth does not terminate with the seventh generation, as Cain's. Rather, the genealogy continues, for God had a purpose behind man's creation which must ultimately be realized; and the only association which can be found between *the seventh from Adam (Enoch)* and *the judgment of the Flood* is the fact that Enoch was translated *before* this judgment.

The chronological order of events in Seth's lineage shows "translation preceding judgment" *after seven generations*. And the lesson which the Spirit of God would have us understand here is the fact that just as one man was translated at a point *showing completeness* (seven) and *preceding judgment* (the Flood), the same thing is going to occur during the present day. The Holy Spirit is in the earth today seeking a "Bride" for God's Son, Jesus Christ. When this selection of the "Bride" by the Holy Spirit for God's Son is complete, this bride will be translated before judgment falls (before the Great Tribulation). As will be shown later, this is what the Parable of the Ten Virgins is all about.

Thus, the seventh generation from Adam through Cain terminated with wickedness and corruption, followed by judgment; but the seventh generation from Adam through Seth terminated with the translation of a righteous man, preceding judgment. And it is from these days preceding the Flood that the Lord draws lessons to teach His people great spiritual truths.

3. When He Is Gone

Enoch lived sixty-five years, begat a son, and called his name "Methuselah." Methuselah was born in the 687th year of the life of Adam, and his name means, "When he is gone, it will be sent." This can only be a direct reference to the future judgment of the Flood, for Methuselah lived 969 years; and the 969th year of Methuselah's life was the 600th year of Noah's life, the year of the Flood. When Methuselah was gone, it (the Flood) was sent.

The cohabitation of the sons of God with the daughters of men had been allowed to run its course, apart from Divine intervention, up to the time of Methuselah's birth. At this point, God stepped in and announced, through the birth of Enoch's son (Methuselah), that things were not going to continue indefinitely as they then existed. So long as Methuselah remained alive, judgment would be withheld; but his death was to be God's way of signaling that conditions as they then existed were at an end.

It is apparent from Scripture that these were things revealed to Enoch before the birth of Methuselah. It is recorded that "Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years" (Gen. 5:22), "by faith Enoch was translated" (Heb. 11:5a), and "before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5b). All these things point to only one conclusion: God made known His plans and purposes to Enoch, for he could not have acted "by faith" [*i.e.* believe God] apart from such knowledge.

"Faith" is simply *believing what God has to say about a matter*, resulting in one governing his actions accordingly. *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). One must know what God has to say before he can exercise faith. Consequently, God had to reveal certain things to Enoch before Enoch could walk "by faith."

Both Enoch and those of the world were engaged in affairs of life during the seventh generation, but after two entirely different fashions. In many instances these affairs had to be the same or very similar; but Enoch acted in the light of a knowledge not possessed by the world. Enoch conducted his affairs in the light of that which God had revealed, for he walked "by faith."

God, at a point in time, had to make known to Enoch that which He was about to bring to pass, which included not only things concerning the coming judgment but also his translation prior to judgment falling. Enoch named his son accordingly, he walked with God for three hundred years, and he was then translated. The entire matter was accomplished "by faith." Enoch believed that which God had to say, resulting in his actions being governed accordingly.

God's revelation to Enoch probably occurred at a time shortly before the birth of Methuselah. The fact that Enoch gave his son the name "Methuselah" shows that these things had already been made known at the time of Methuselah's birth, and the statement that he "walked with God *after* he begat Methuselah three hundred years" would possibly indicate something occurring in Enoch's life at a point near the birth of Methuselah. There is nothing recorded about Enoch walking with God during the years preceding Methuselah's birth (although he may have). The reference is only to the years following; and the clear inference seems to be that such was the result of God making known His plans and purposes.

4. *The Flood*

Enoch was translated into heaven 987 years following the creation of Adam. This was sixty-nine years before the birth of Noah and 669 years before the Flood. The Flood came upon the earth 1,656 years following the creation of Adam.

In the chronological framework of Heb. 11:5-7, the numerous years separating Enoch from the time immediately preceding the Flood are skipped over entirely. There is no event in these verses between God's translation of Enoch and His dealings with Noah in relation to the Flood. Insofar as the chronological framework and dispensational teachings of the Record are concerned, once God completed His dealings with Enoch, terminating with Enoch's translation, then God began to deal with Noah relative to the coming time of judgment, with a view to events beyond this judgment.

The truth concerning the chronology within God's dispensational dealings with the Church and Israel has forever been set forth in the opening verses of Genesis. Once God completes His dealings with the Church, He will remove the Bride of Christ from the earth via translation, as Enoch. God will then turn to Israel (typified by Noah) and begin to deal with this nation once again. God's future dealings with Israel, as His past dealings with Noah, will center around the nation during the coming time of judgment, with a view to events beyond this judgment.

During the 6,000 years allotted to man, comprising Man's Day, the Noachian Flood has only one parallel - that which it typifies. There was no comparable judgment during Man's Day before the Flood; nor has there been a comparable judgment since the Flood. But Scripture records a judgment in the immediate

future, at the very end of Man's Day, which will once again affect the inhabitants of the entire world. Mass destruction on an unprecedented scale will occur. The cities of the nations will be reduced to rubble, and Gentile world power will be brought to naught. And just as Noah passed safely through a time of worldwide destruction in a specially prepared place during his day, Israel (the remnant) will pass safely through a time of worldwide destruction in a specially prepared place during the coming day.

The account given concerning Noah, as the account given concerning Enoch, reveals a life governed "by faith." Noah had been warned by God of "things not seen as yet." He then "moved with fear", preparing "an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb. 11:7). That is, Noah *believed* that which God had made known to him, and governed his actions accordingly.

Israel in the antitype has also been warned concerning things yet future. The Old Testament abounds with information concerning the coming time of "Jacob's trouble." Then, commenting on the matter in His discourse on Mt. Olivet, Christ left specific instructions for the Jewish people to "flee into the mountains ['wilderness' (Gk. *eremos*, 'desert,' or 'desolate place') in Rev. 12:6, 14]" when a certain event to which He referred occurs (Matt. 24:15); and, when this time arrives, a remnant is going to follow God's instructions. Actually, the remnant at this point, in matters relative to physical deliverance, will be acting "by faith"; and this will result in a segment of the Jewish people being protected in a specially prepared place in the desolate mountainous terrain of the land.

It is interesting to note that Israel alone, among all the nations, possesses certain *promises* upon which God will act. Israel (as Shem in Gen. 9:26), *has* a God (the One True and Living God); but the Gentile nations, (as Ham and Japheth in Gen. 9:25, 27), exist *apart from* God. The Gentiles are "without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

God has promised Israel, "*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not*" (Jer. 33:3). Israel, placed in a position where the nation will be forced to so do, is going to claim this promise during the Great Tribulation. The Jewish people during that day, as the Israelites in Egypt during Moses' day, will find themselves in such dire straights that they will be forced to cry out to the God of their fathers for deliverance. And exactly as in the historic account (in the type), God will *hear, remember, and deliver* His people (Exo. 2:23-3:8).

Thus, in the type or in the antitype, the actions of God's people revolve around "faith", *i.e.*, "believing God." The world, existing "without God", knows *nothing* about faith; and the world has continued (past) and will continue (future) within this same framework, *until* the Great Tribulation (just as did the Flood) comes.

The Postdiluvian World

As previously noted, referring to conditions on earth at the time of His return, Christ not only called attention to the days of Noah in the antediluvian world but He also called attention to the days of Lot in the postdiluvian world (Luke 17:28ff); and *two* individuals stand out prominently during these postdiluvian days: 1) *Abraham*, and 2) *Lot*.

1. *Abraham*

The "God of glory" appeared to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees four hundred twenty-seven years following the Flood. Abraham, at this time, was "called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance." Responding to the call of God, simply *believing* that which had been promised, Abraham departed from Ur, "not knowing whither he went" (Gen. 12:1-3; Acts 7:2-5; Heb. 11:8-10).

After Abraham had entered the land of Canaan, God continued to progressively make known various things concerning His will, plans, and purpose. In fact, checking the section in Genesis covering Abraham's life, one cannot help but be struck with the frequency and extent of God's intervention after this fashion (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-22; 18:1-33; 21:12, 13; 22:1, 2, 11, 12, 15-18; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:8).

Abraham walked "by faith" (Heb. 11:8ff). This though is not at all to say that Abraham did not experience failures in his life through the ever-present man of flesh, for he did (*e.g.* going down to Egypt for help, or events surrounding Ishmael [Gen. 12:10ff; 16:1ff]). The thought set forth concerning Abraham's faith has to do with the overriding principle in Abraham's life being *a belief in that which God had revealed*, allowing God to lead him, through various trials and testings, from immaturity to maturity.

Though going down to "Egypt" (a type of the *world*), Abraham returned to "the place of the altar" on the mount opposite "Bethel", *the house of God* (Gen. 12:8-10; 13:1-4); or concerning Ishmael, Abraham ultimately followed God's command (Gen. 21:9-14; Gen. 17:18).

It took God about sixty years to bring Abraham to that point in his life where the simple response became, "Behold, here I am" (Gen. 22:1). This response appears at the beginning of the Lord's final recorded appearance to Abraham, testing him relative to the sacrifice of his own son. And Abraham responded apart from any delay or remonstrance. He had been brought to the point of *complete reliance* upon the Lord, resulting in *perfect obedience*.

The lesson for Christians today is quite simple: God has made known His will and purpose in His Word, and "failure" along the pilgrim pathway does not necessarily mean *defeat*. The Christian is to return to the mount opposite Bethel. *Believing that which God has revealed MUST* be the overriding principle in one's life; and God, through various trials and testings (James 1:2-4), will progressively lead the Christian from immaturity to maturity.

2. Lot

The account of Lot is set in marked contrast to that of Abraham in the Word of God. Abraham walked by *faith*, but Lot walked by *sight*. Actually, apart from that which Abraham may have made known to him concerning God's revealed plans and purposes, Lot *could not* have walked "by faith." There is no record of the Lord revealing anything to Lot *until* immediately preceding the destruction of the cities of the plain (Gen. 19:1ff). Thus, a walk by *sight*, apart from *faith*, could only be expected as the governing principle in his life, leading to tragic consequences.

Lot didn't know anything about the impending destruction of the cities of the plain until immediately before judgment fell. He lived his life involved in the affairs of the world. And, though he was delivered from the destruction which befell the cities of the plain, he ultimately found himself dwelling in a *cave* "in the mountain" (Gen. 19:22-30).

One Shall be Taken, and the Other Left

Matthew 24:40-44

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

The Lord's reference to one taken and another left is the first of four parallel parts in the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse. Each part actually has to do with the same thing, but from a different perspective. Each has to do with the Lord's dealings with His servants (Christians) during present and future times, with the coming kingdom in view. In this respect, all four parts viewed together (in the light of the parable of the fig tree and the days of Noah [which lead into and set the tenor of thought for all which follows]), present a complete, composite picture in a threefold fashion: 1) the Christians' present responsibility, 2) the Christians' future accountability, and 3) the relationship of both to the coming kingdom of Christ.

Christians have a *responsibility* to live their lives in a manner which reflects their high calling. Salvation is for a purpose, and that purpose has to do with the coming *kingdom*. Christians have been called "unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Peter 5:1, 10; 2 Peter 1:3). The Biblical picture of this Salvation of the Soul is not so much *saved from* ("from Hell") as it is *saved unto* ("unto his kingdom and glory").

"Responsibility", in turn, demands *accountability*. Every Christian will one day appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ to render an account concerning *how* he carried out his responsibility. All things will be revealed in the presence of a righteous, omnipotent and omniscient Judge (Rev. 1:12-20). The previous works of the ones being judged will come under scrutiny, and the results will have a direct bearing on the Christians' position in the kingdom which follows.

The purpose for the Judgment Seat, in this respect, is in keeping with the purpose for the entire present dispensation. God is today calling out the *rulers* who are to reign as co-heirs with His Son during the coming age, and the decisions and determinations rendered at the Judgment Seat concerning these individuals will have to do with their being placed in or being denied one of the numerous proffered positions which the co-heirs will occupy with Christ.

Accordingly, the *end* or *goal* toward which everything moves in the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse is *the coming kingdom*. It is the kingdom with its glory to which Christians have been called, and any Christian failing to realize his calling therein will have failed to realize the very purpose for his salvation.

1 Peter 1:9

Receiving the end (the goal, the very purpose) of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

The coming kingdom is not only the end or goal toward which everything moves in the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse but in the other two sections as well. God's dealings with the Jewish people in the first section (24:4-31) occur during and immediately following the Great Tribulation and lead into the

kingdom, and God's dealings with the Gentiles in the third section (25:31-46) occur at the end of the Great Tribulation (at the conclusion of God's dealings with all the others) and also lead into the *kingdom*.

The *kingdom* is actually the end or goal toward which everything in Scripture moves, save events in the few references describing conditions during the eternal ages beyond the millennium (e.g. 1Cor. 15:24-28; parts of Rev. 21, 22). Beginning with the opening chapters of Genesis, the emphasis is upon *man holding the sceptre, ruling over a restored earth*; and the emphasis never changes throughout Scripture. Christ's discourse on Mt. Olivet moves more to the end of the matter and presents summary information relative to concluding events in God's dealings with the three groups of mankind (Jew, Christian, and Gentile), with the *kingdom*, as throughout Scripture, the main object in view.

It is clearly shown in the parable of the Householder and His servant and in the parable of the talents (Matt. 24:45-51; 25:14-30) that man ultimately placed in the position of "ruler" is the focal point (24:47; 25:21, 23). And it such focal point is the same in the other two parallel parts in the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse (24:40-44; 25:1-13).

Note that each part begins in a similar fashion, referring back to the opening verses in this section (vs. 32-39): "Then..." (24:40-44); "Who then..." (24:45-51); "Then..." (25:1-13); "For it is just as a man..." [literal rendering, referring back to the parable of the ten virgins in vs. 1-13, and consequently back to the opening verses of the section] (25:14-30). Then note that each part has been given to provide additional information which will help explain another part. In this respect, the words "Who then" and "Then", opening the second and third parts, refer back to the previous parts as well as back to the opening verses of the section.

It is very important to take note of the continuous time-line pictured in these parables.

The first part (vs. 40-44), for example, closes with the exhortation to *Watch, Be ready*, "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (vs. 42, 44). The second part immediately following (vs. 45-51) opens with the words, "*Who then* is a faithful and wise servant..." The allusion is not only back to the opening verses of the section (vs. 32-39), but also back to the preceding part (vs. 40-44). The parable of the Householder and His servant has been given to provide additional information and help explain the preceding verses dealing with one taken and the other left. This parable concerns the same thing - faithfulness or unfaithfulness on the part of the Lord's servants, resulting in their being granted or being denied positions as *rulers* with Christ in the kingdom. And so it is with the following two parables.

This connection between the four parts can be seen slightly clearer in the opening verse of the fourth part. Note that the words, "the kingdom of heaven is" (v. 14, KJV), are in italics, indicating that they are not in the Greek text. The word "as" is a translation of the Greek word *hosper*, which is a connecting particle meaning "just as" or "even as." This is the same word translated "as" earlier in the Olivet Discourse (24:37, 38), comparing the days of Noah with the day of the coming of the Son of Man. The word is used in the same sense beginning the parable of the talents. It is used as a connective to show that what is about to follow is like that which has preceded, giving rise to the translation, "For it is just as a man..." The parable of the talents was given to help explain the parable of the ten virgins (or, for that matter, the two parts preceding the parable of the ten virgins as well), and it concerns the same thing - faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the Lord's servants, resulting in their being accorded or being denied *entrance* into the marriage festivities and subsequent positions as *rulers* with Christ in the kingdom.

But at this point in this discourse, the *Firstfruits Rapture* is in view. Who will be taken, and who will be left?

The Relation of Salvation of the Soul to Rapture

This portion of the Olivet Discourse is expanded upon in the parallel Luke version; notice that Luke provides additional details not mentioned in Matthew. Luke adds the phrase, *Whosoever shall seek to save his life (the other) shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life (the one) shall preserve it.*

Consider the entire version in Luke:

Luke 17:26-37

And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away (the one): and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife (the other).

Whosoever shall seek to save his life (the other) shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life (the one) shall preserve it.

I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

It is obvious that according to the above Luke version, the one who shall be taken and the one who shall be left is contingent as to whether that person has sought to save his life or not in this age (faithfulness or unfaithfulness in this age). This puts an entirely different perspective on the matter. Luke is telling us that being ready for rapture is *conditional*, depending on how you have lived your life here – matters pertaining to Salvation of the Soul.

There is much discussion in today's Pre-Millennial Church (those who believe in the actual, physical return of the Lord to set up His Kingdom) concerning the Rapture. Most disagree with each other as to whether the rapture will be pre-tribulation (before the 7 years of tribulation outlined in the book of Revelation), Mid-Great Tribulation (at midpoint, or 3 ½ years into the tribulation period, or Post-Great Tribulation (at the end of the seven years), or for some, even at all. However, they mostly agree that the *entire* Body of Christ will be taken up at one rapture. *This is an assumption, and it is a very serious error.* I will address this issue later in this book.

Note that here again all the words "life" can also be translated "soul" from the Greek. However, in the above verses we are told when the soul shall be saved:

"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

This points to the time of *rapture*. The meaning of verse 33 is clear ("*Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it*, etc."): The one who has saved his soul in this age shall be left behind at the first coming of the Son of Man. There does not appear to be any difference at all between the two persons described, neither in work, nor in location; yet at this rapture there does come a difference. And what a difference it is - in a moment of time, a vast, and heartbreaking (for some) difference! And there will be weeping, and gnashing of teeth! *Should we be like Lot's wife*, wanting to preserve the soul (our present goodly lifestyle on earth) and unwilling to forsake it, *we will not be taken* up to where the Lord ordains us to be, even though we may not "perish in Sodom" (Luke 17:29) with the unbelievers.

Luke 21:34-36

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

This is obviously a warning to Christians. Only Christians can watch and pray; unbelievers are certainly not watching for His coming and living their lives accordingly - much less praying. The Christian who is *overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life* has chosen to save his life now, but he will lose it later. He will also not be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man (at the Judgment Seat of Christ) after this rapture.

Also, notice that the promise of escaping all these things is given to a certain group only – the overcomers in Rev. 2-3; those in the Church of the Philadelphians who have "kept the word of My patience.":

Revelation 3:10

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

This is clearly the promise of rapture to a select group – not to all Christians. It is a promise to the overcomers only, and not all Christians are overcomers.

Many Bible teachers disagree with this interpretation. They argue that this "hour of temptation" is nothing more than the daily temptations that Satan uses in his efforts to bring about defeat in a Christian's life, and that the promise concerning deliverance in the above verse would have to be the same deliverance Christ taught us to pray for in Matthew 6:13: "deliver us from evil".

I strongly refute that notion. It is clear to me that all the promises to the overcomers in Rev. 2 and 3 are promises to be fulfilled in the future, particularly concerning the end times. Consider just a few of the specific promises made only to overcomers:

1. Eat of the tree of life.
2. Receive the crown of life.
3. Shall not be hurt of the second death.
4. Power over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron.
5. Will not blot his name out of the book of life.
6. Grant to sit with me in my throne.

I ask you, which of the above promises are not future in nature? Accordingly, the promise to keep them from the hour of temptation must be future in nature, also. The context demands it.

I urge you not to be deceived by what you may have been taught – but rather to consider the plain teaching of Scripture. To apply the above verses to non-believers causes you to miss a clear warning to believers which could lead to utterly disastrous consequences if taken lightly.

One Shall Be Left

The Olivet Discourse - which we are presently examining - clearly shows that only certain groups escape the tribulation. For the Jews living at that time, it is an *earthly* escape:

Matthew 24:15-16

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)¹⁶ Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

This is the escape of the Jews (*them which be in Judaea*) to an earthly place of safety (*into the mountains*). We can see this in greater detail in Revelation:

Revelation 12:6

And the woman (Israel) fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

This is the escape of believing Jews from the Antichrist (believing at least in the sense that they believe and take to heart what Christ prophesied in Mat. 24:16). Beyond the *mountains* (referenced in verse 16) lies the *wilderness*, where the experience of Sinai is repeated: "*that they* (presumably the Angels) *should feed her there* (doubtless again with manna) *a thousand two hundred and threescore days*", or throughout the reign of Antichrist.

This is the earthly deliverance of the God's earthly Jewish people who obeyed Christ's command to "flee".

A portion of the Christians alive at this time will escape in accordance with another of Christ's commands:

Luke 21:34-36

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. 35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

This is the heavenly escape of the heavenly people who obey Christ's command to "watch and pray". But notice that the escape, in both the earthly and the heavenly cases, is contingent upon *obedience* to the command.

To the Jew Jesus says, "*Flee*"; to the Christian He says, "*Watch and pray*". But what if they do not obey? Are Christ's commands, as a matter of fact, or of Scriptural record, always and constantly obeyed by all His people? *No command has God ever given to His people but that some of them disobeyed it.*

But here, at this particular point, the decision is swift and sure. Those who obey His command are taken (escape); those who disobey His command are left (do not escape).

There are those who would say that the verse in Luke 21:36 has nothing to do with the rapture. They would say that it has to do with the things enumerated in verse 34 – surfeiting, drunkenness, and cares of this life. But I would remind you that the escape concerns "*these things that shall come to pass*". To the best of my understanding, "*shall come to pass*" encompasses things that will happen in the future. People are already at the present time surfeiting, getting drunk, and involved in cares of this life. To say otherwise is to ignore the intended tense of the phrase.

Furthermore, they would say that the division that comes from "standing or not standing before the Lord" has to do with standing in the Lord's presence (at the Judgment Seat of Christ) *in an approved manner* in that coming day. They miss the whole point. It is true that we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the only way to appear at this judgment is through being raptured alive or being raised from the dead and then raptured. But they that are accounted worthy, i.e., they that are ready, they that have been watching and praying, they that have the extra oil in their vessel, will stand before the Son of Man at an *earlier* time, and will as a result escape all these things that are coming on the whole earth. *The failure to see that more than one rapture is taught in Scripture causes one to misinterpret these verses, and as a result to miss the very vital warning that our Lord intended Christians to receive.*

The various raptures seen in Scripture are discussed in detail in a later chapter; but I will make a few statements here for your consideration: Why do you think there is so much controversy concerning the exact timing of the Rapture, each position seemingly undergirded with what appears to be correctly applied portions of Scripture? Could it be that each position is correct, but not to the mutual exclusion of the other positions?

Now I will boldly suggest that "the Rapture of the *Church*" is neither a Scriptural nor a justifiable expression. Unlike the term 'Trinity,' which, while found in no specific passage, has many a chapter and verse to support it, the phrase, "Rapture of the Church," implying that the Church is a whole, and must be raptured, "caught up" as a whole, - all together and at once, - occurs nowhere, and is nowhere implied in the Word.

The words "The Rapture" assumes, independently of proof, that there is, and virtually declares that there can be, but *one* rapture. From the view-point of earthly development and readiness for heavenly elevation and serviceableness, rapture is likened by the Lord to reaping of white barley and golden-brown wheat during "all the days of harvest." The field is the wide world, with its differences of latitude and altitude, of soil and climate. Not all grain ripens or gets reaped together - hence firstfruits, general harvest, and corners of the field. Surely the parallel is in the successive mowings, serial gatherings, in each man's own order during the "Parousia" - the Presence of the waiting Husbandman.

Our Lord, from the viewpoint of the Revelation and of His Advent, divides the Church throughout this present dispensation ("the things which are" – Rev. 1:19) into seven divisions: the seven churches from Ephesus through Laodicea. In a like manner, "the things that will be hereafter" reveals several raptures extending over the period of the Parousia (or at least refers several times to raptures, the majority of which are provably distinct resurrections and ascensions.) Without elaboration, I will show you several raptures in Revelation; I will defend my position in a later chapter:

- 1). Rev. 4:1 - – the 24 elders
- 2). Rev. 7:9 _ – great multitude no man could number
- 3). Rev. 11:12 - the two witnesses
- 4). Rev. 12:5 – the Man Child
- 5). Rev. 14:1 – the 144,000
- 6). Rev. 14:16 – the reaping of the ripe harvest of the earth
Rev. 15:2 – them that had gotten victory over the beast, etc.
- 7). Rev 18:4 Come out of her, my people
- 8). Rev. 20:4 - the tribulation martyrs

This brings us to the misunderstood, but clear and definite, declaration of "one taken, one left." This "taking," as the Greek shows, is entirely different from the "taking away" by the flood in judgment. It is a taking to favor and honour, as at the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John were *taken* to the exclusion of the other disciples. And such rapture has already occurred. For Enoch was taken, Methuselah was left; Elijah was taken, Elisha left. The context proves it is a matter of warning for readiness, for watchfulness against earth-stains and earth-chains. Only disciples were addressed or concerned. If we are even now fully prepared and fit, warning can do us no harm, and if we are holy, humble, and cautious, we will not resent or reject it.

If we believe in the resurrection of the dead and the rapture of the living, we should be prepared to consider, without difficulty or prejudice, whether these are all at one time, or in groups. As to resurrection, the answer is plain. There are successive groupings. (1) The resurrection of Christ. (2) The "First Resurrection" (the out-resurrection from among the dead of Phil. 3: 11, which the apostle Paul desired to "attain unto"). And (3) the final resurrection of Rev. 20: 12 for the Great White Throne judgment.

So also we have definite indications that the first rapture is selective, or partial. This is not a matter for pressing some particular theory. The question is - "What saith the Scripture?"

The definite promise given to the Philadelphian church in Rev. 3:10, of escape "*from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth*" seems almost to necessitate rapture. This agrees remarkably with the earnest words of our Lord in Luke 21:36, for He exhorts believers, "Watch ye therefore (don't be entangled with Laodicea), and pray always that ye may be *accounted worthy* to escape all these things that shall come to pass (the coming tribulation), and to stand before the Son of man". It is hard to reconcile this warning to believers from the lips of the Lord Jesus with the view that all believers do, as a matter of course, escape. If all believers escape, then why did Jesus give this warning?

Taken or Left

The word "taken" (vs. 40, 41) is a translation of the Greek word *paralambano*. This is a compound word comprised of *para* ("beside", or "alongside") and *lambano* ("to take"). Thus, the word goes a step beyond just simply *taking*. It is taking the person alongside or to oneself (Matt. 17:1; 20:17 where *paralambano* is used). This would be the word used referring to the reception of an individual as an "associate" or a "companion", which is actually what is involved in this passage.

John 14:3

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

This is the same Greek word used in the above verse in John 14:3, and the "one taken" is in fact a fulfillment of this promise.

Then, the word "left" (vs. 40, 41) is a translation of the Greek word *aphiemi*, which is used as antithetical to *paralambano*. This is best translated just as it appears – "left". These were left, just as the disciples left their nets:

Matthew 4:20

And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

"One shall be taken, and the other left" (vs. 40-41). Why do we have the two verses? We know that all who belonged to Noah entered the ark and were therefore saved from the impending flood. According to strict typology, then, is not this to be interpreted that all the saints will be raptured together? Let us see that the Lord purposely adds the words of these two verses here lest we greatly misunderstand. Although it is true that as the days of Noah were, so shall be the coming of the Son of man, there is nevertheless this one exception which our Lord tries to explain here.

As would be expected, there are several opposing views of the men and women mentioned in these verses.

(1) They all refer to the Jews at that time.

(2) The ones taken point to the regenerated, while the ones left point to the unsaved.

(3) The taken are those taken in judgment, and the left are those Christians left to endure the Great Tribulation period until the end.

(4) Both the taken and the left are Christians (the view of this book).

Let us consider these different viewpoints.

(1) As far as this interpretation is concerned, I maintain that the verses of one taken and the other left are found in the Christian section only in both Matthew and Luke. I believe this alone disqualifies this view. However, in addition we know that the Jews must undergo this final seven years of "Jacob's Trouble". This is the fulfillment of the final seventieth week of Daniels Seventy Weeks to be determined upon the Jewish people (Dan. 9:24-26). God's clock was stopped at the end of the 69th week, when "Messiah was cut off" at His crucifixion. The nation of Israel was "left desolate" at this point; they were put aside for a dispensation in order that God could take out of the Gentiles "a people for His name". At the end of this dispensation, God's clock will once again resume in order to complete the final seventieth week. There is no escape from the earth for the Jewish people during the seven years of tribulation.

(2) The ones viewed cannot be viewed as unsaved for the following reasons:

a. "Watch therefore" (vs. 42). The word "therefore" connects with the preceding verses 40 and 41. Since you are saved and have life, you are expected to watch. Those who lack the Lord's life cannot watch. What would an unsaved person be watching for? He doesn't even believe in the Lord, much less His coming for His church. Besides, the unsaved have no spiritual capacity to understand the things of the Lord. They are certainly not living their lives in anticipation of His coming.

The determining factor in rapture is not a being saved or unsaved, but it is a case of one's works after regeneration. The current overwhelming view that all the regenerated will be raptured at one time together is a serious mistake. It is not supported by Scripture, but only by dogma.

b. "Your Lord cometh" (vs. 42). The unsaved do not have the relationship of servant and master with the Lord. Man may misuse this word, but the Lord never will. The unsaved person may consider himself to be a servant of the Lord, but the Lord will not carelessly use such a term as "your Lord" here.

c. "The thief was coming" (vs. 43). If a thief comes to steal something, he will take the best and leave the rest. Thus it is not a difference in kind but one of degree.

d. The five foolish in the parable of the virgins told of in chapter 25 are not false virgins. They are real, except that they are not wise as are the five wise virgins. The wise ones spare no effort to carry oil in the vessels, whereas the foolish are too lazy to make such a provision. Nevertheless, both the wise and the foolish are virgins, and they all go forth to meet the bridegroom. The unsaved do not go forth to meet the bridegroom.

e. Judging from typology, those who are left can be the saved as well as those who are taken can be the saved. Both Enoch (who was raptured) and Noah (who entered the ark) were saved. Yet both Abraham (the intercessor) and Lot (who passed through tribulation) were saved, too. But Elijah (the taken) and Elisha (the left) were saved. The disciples whom the Lord in His ascension left behind were all saved ones. Both Philip (the one taken away) and the eunuch (the one left behind) were saved. Thus, it is not uncommon in Scripture for both the taken and the left to be saved.

Joining verses 40 and 41 with verse 42, one may readily see that the real issue lies in "to watch" or "not to watch"; otherwise the Lord cannot employ the word "therefore", nor can He exhort us to be watchful. If the condition for early rapture is regeneration and not watchfulness and proper works after regeneration, then there would be no reason for the Lord to enjoin us to watch. For in the verse He merely charges us to be watchful, with nothing being said about repentance, faith, or regeneration. I believe that both the taken and the left mentioned in verses 40-42 are saved ones - surely our Lord will not advise the unregenerated to watch.

Furthermore, it is vital to our understanding to note the context of the entire passage in Matthew. The parables that follow "one shall be taken, and the other left" are meant to shed additional light to this verse. *By their context, they denote who shall be taken, and who shall be left.*

i). The Goodman of the House and the Thief – Had the Goodman been watching, his house would not have been broken up. By watching, he can avoid this bad thing.

ii). The Faithful and Wise Servant – this servant was *taken*; he was *taken* to the Judgment Seat and made a ruler over all his Lord's goods. Such a reward can only be given at the Judgment Seat; therefore, he had to be *taken* there to receive it. Previously, he was alive at the time of the rapture; when his Lord came (in the air), he was found so doing (*giving meat to the household in due season*). NOTE: those "dead in Christ" cannot be found so doing when He comes; this applies only to saints living at that time.

iii). The Evil Servant – he was not watching and doing his Lord's will. He was left to endure "*his portion with the unbelievers*". Where are the unbelievers? They are never even under *consideration* to be taken to safety; they will certainly endure the Great Tribulation.

iv). The Parable of the Ten Virgins – The wise virgins are taken ("*went in with him to the marriage*"); they had watched and were "ready". The foolish virgins were not ready; they were left – only "*they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut*".

(3) As far as the view that those taken are the wicked taken in judgment and the saints are left: I find no other Scriptural corroboration for such a view. If this were true, then why did the Lord then say, "*Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come*"? What would be the point of watching, if those watching were to endure the coming tribulation along with the rest of the world? How would it be possible that the Lord is coming to get the wicked to carry away (in judgment) with Himself, and the saints to be left here for the judgment to come? The Tribulation period is simply not in view in this Christian section of the Olivet Discourse. This is what confuses most commentators.

Comparing Noah's day with the day of the Rapture is wonderful support for the subject He was teaching. The spirit of Noah's day was sinful and careless living; and Jesus stated the same would be true of this promised occasion. This line of thinking fits no other event that relates to the end of the world. The wickedness that characterizes the Tribulation Period is far greater and described with totally different language. They cannot be seen as dealing with the same period.

The language of "two" people being in a given place with one taken and one left would have no significance if it was not speaking about the Rapture of the righteous. It certainly would have no bearing on the kind of alert and careful living He was seeking to promote among His disciples. To use this kind of thought outside the context of the Lord's coming to get His own bride would sound ridiculous. Twisting

the Lord's lesson of truth about the end is carelessly treated when men make unclear arguments out of such a simple, straightforward statement. Jesus meant exactly what He said.

The last seven verses of this chapter follow perfectly the above understanding. Once He establishes this great warning of the sudden Rapture to get the overcoming saints, He speaks clearly about them as faithful and wise servants. Look at His words:

Matthew 24:45-51

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It is foolish to try and connect these words to any other idea but the Rapture. Notice, "*Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*" Our modern theology has so watered down the requirements for the Rapture that it is no wonder that they want to deny the Rapture in this context of verses. Anything with a religious label is being treated as Rapture-ready material. These verses destroy such nonsense. The saint of God who meets the Lord in the air - the one taken from the presence of the one left - is unique language warning this untoward generation to return to the cross and the crucifixion of the flesh. If we do not, we shall join the "left" crowd on that awesome day.

The Opposing View That These Verses Mean Those Taken In Judgment

I will briefly summarize the viewpoint that maintains those "taken" are taken in judgment:

This view maintains that it is the context of the verses that determine such a conclusion. And this is indeed true – the context is vital to a proper understanding. They maintain that in the context, those who were not prepared in the days of Noah were taken away, in judgment, by the flood. Verse 39 ends by saying, "so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." They say that clearly the emphasis in this verse is on unbelievers being taken away in the judgment of the flood. And they conclude that, therefore, verses 40-41 drive that point home by giving a couple of examples of the coming separation that will occur at this time of judgment.

Two classes were living in Noah's day. The ones who were unbelieving – and these were swept away by the divine judgment. The other class was Noah and his house, and he and his own were left and not destroyed by the judgment. It will be so again in the coming of the son of Man. The unbelievers will be taken away in the day of judgment and wrath; the others will be left on the earth to receive and enjoy the blessings of the coming age and enter into the kingdom, which will then be established.

First of all, this view fails to recognize the division of the Olivet Discourse into 3 separate prophecies that apply to 3 distinct classes of people on the earth at that time – the Jews, the Christians, and the Gentiles. In the Jewish section (Matt. 24:3-31), Jesus relates what will occur to the Jews during the seven years of

Tribulation, or Daniel's Seventieth Week. He depicts the plight of the Jew from the deception being fostered that their Messiah has come and the beginning of sorrows, to the time of the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation in the Temple, when a remnant will "flee to the mountains", and so on until the Son of Man makes His physical return at the end of the Tribulation. This is a complete chronology of the events from a Jewish standpoint.

Then in Matt. 24:32 to 25:31, He shifts into prophecy as it applies to Christians. This shift occurs when He tells them to "learn the parable of the fig tree". The parables were only given to Christians to understand. Furthermore, twice in this passage, He uses the term Kingdom of Heaven (Parable of the Ten Virgins, and the Parable of the Talents). The Kingdom of Heaven no longer applies to the Jews at this point. It has been taken away from them and given to a "nation who will bring forth fruits thereof".

Then in Matt. 25:32-46 He describes events as pertaining to the Gentiles " *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.* This is the judgment of the Gentiles remaining alive on the earth at the end of the Tribulation.

If you fail to see this division into three groups, you are then prone to make deductions from one section apply to the wrong group.

The passage we are reviewing, "One shall be taken, and the other left", is clearly in the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse. And it is true, as the opposing view maintains, that you must exegete this passage in accordance with the context in which it was given. *This is certainly very true.* But the point is, they have missed the *emphasis* in this passage. They say the emphasis is on those being taken away in the judgment of the flood. But this is not the emphasis, a fact that they would see if they would but stop and consider. The true emphasis is on the *sudden unexpectedness* that caught them totally unaware of the coming judgment. "*And they knew not, until the flood came*". The repeated emphasis throughout this section – no less than six times – is to watch, lest His sudden coming catch you unaware.

Matthew 24:33

So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

Matthew 24:39

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Matthew 24:42

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Matthew 24:44

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Matthew 24:50

The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.

Matthew 25:13

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

I don't know how I can make the proper emphasis any clearer. Our Lord is coming for His church "as a thief in the night" (1Thess. 5:2); and He warns us over and over to watch, lest we are caught by surprise.

Luke 21:36

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

It is clear that those not watching will not "escape all these things", and will then be "the other left".

The Parallel in Luke 17:20-37

Several verses in Luke, chapter seventeen are very similar to verses in the Jewish section of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew (Luke 17:23, 24, 31, 37; Matt, 24:17, 18, 23-28), leading some expositors to believe that the section in Luke is "Jewish" rather than "Christian." But perhaps they fail to notice that there is a line of division in the Luke passage between that portion applicable to the Jews and that portion applicable to the Christians, just as there is in the Matthew version. This division comes after vs. 25:

Luke 17:25

But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

Everything from vs. 26-36 is distinctly Christian in nature, and parallels the same passages in Matt. 24:32 to 25:30. Therefore the reference to false prophets is predominantly Jewish in nature. But something also often overlooked is the fact that marked differences, for definite reasons, appear in several of these similar verses.

1. Similarities and Distinctions

First, note that events surrounding the warning about returning to one's house in Matt. 24:17, 18 are not the same as those events surrounding the similar warning in Luke 17:31. The context of one has to do with the appearance of Antichrist, and the context of the other has to do with the appearance of the True Christ. Israel is awaiting Antichrist; but Christians are awaiting the True Christ, which reveals the proper distinction between the ways these similar verses of Scripture are used.

Second, note that a reference to false Christs and false prophets associated with days preceding Christ's return (Matt. 24:23-26; Luke 17:23) would be just as applicable in Christian circles as in Jewish. In fact, the false message to be carried to Israel by false Christs and false prophets during the Great Tribulation, which will be validated by signs and wonders (performed through the power of demons), is something which begins towards the end of the Christian dispensation and carries over into the Great Tribulation (1Tim. 4:1).

2. Remember Lot's wife

I repeat, *should we be like Lot's wife*, wanting to preserve the soul (our present materialistic lifestyle on earth) and unwilling to forsake it, *we will not be taken* up to where the Lord ordains us to be, even though we may not "perish in Sodom" (Luke 17:29) with the unbelievers. But we will, in such a case, suffer our "portion" with the unbelievers:

Luke 12:46

The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

That "portion with the unbelievers", as we shall see later, consists of suffering at least a portion of the Great Tribulation (in particular, the first six seals.) Again, recall that although the principle remains the same for all believers, this verse is particularly directed at those believers alive at the time of His coming. Only live believers can look for Him.

Two very significant things stand out concerning Lot's wife: a) she was delivered from Sodom along with Lot and her two virgin daughters before the *final* judgment fell, but b) she nevertheless perished in a lesser *secondary* judgment because of her disobedience. She *looked back* and was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:16, 26). Remember the Lord's injunction to believers in the Luke passage being considered:

Luke 17:31

In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back [let him not look back as Lot's wife did].

And Christ drew from this account to teach His disciples great spiritual truths concerning saving or losing one's "life ['soul']" (v. 33), which is associated contextually with being either received in an intimate manner or turned away in an opposite manner (vs. 34-36).

Lot, his wife, and his two virgin daughters were told, "Escape for thy life ['soul']; *look not behind thee*, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed [consumed 'in the iniquity of the city']" (Gen. 19:17; v. 15). However, Lot's wife *looked back* toward Sodom. She looked back toward the things of "the plain" (in antitype the *world*, which is about to be destroyed in the coming Great Tribulation) rather than ahead to "the mountain" (signifying the *kingdom*, which would endure beyond the destruction of the cities of the plain, and in antitype, the coming Kingdom of Heaven).

Christ stated during His earthly ministry, "*No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:62). The word "looking" in the Greek text (as are the words "watch" and "pray" in Luke 21:36), is in a tense showing continuous action. A man beginning a task (putting his hand to the plough) and looking back after the fashion described by the Lord would be continually turning away from the task. He would be headed in one direction but continually looking in another direction. Rather than keeping his eyes fixed on the goal ahead, he would be continually turning away from this goal. Christ declared that such a man would be *unfit* "for the kingdom" (James 1:8).

The mention of Lot's wife is drawn from Christ's reference to the days of Noah and the days of Lot in preceding verses (vs. 26-31). These verses, along with verses 32 and 33, form a parallel to Christ's reference to the days of Noah in Matt. 24:37-39. The thought in these verses has to do with the dangers inherent in Christians becoming involved in the ways and practices of the world. Such an involvement will gradually lead Christians away from the things of "the mountain" toward the things of "the plain." Over a period of time, Christians involved in the affairs of the world will gradually find their attitudes and interests changing. They will become more and more interested in the things of the plain, while at the same time becoming less and less interested in the things of the mountain. The path which they have been called to travel will be in one direction, but their interests will lead them in a different direction. Rather

than looking out ahead toward the goal of their calling, they will find themselves looking back toward a world diametrically opposed to this goal.

It is evident that such was the case with Lot's wife. Lot had dwelled with his family in the cities of the plain for many years. In fact, Lot seated in the gate of Sodom (Gen. 19:1) immediately preceding the destruction of the cities of the plain reveals his involvement in the internal affairs of the city. The elders were the ones who usually sat in the gate of a city in that day, carrying on civil or legal matters; and it is evident that Lot had taken his place *among* them. Lot had settled down in Sodom to this extent, and related Scripture leaves little question concerning the fact that members of his family had settled down in Sodom to a similar extent.

Lot "lingered" in Sodom with his family after he had been warned concerning the impending destruction; and he, his wife, and his two virgin daughters had to be physically removed by the two angels who had been sent into Sodom (Gen. 19:16). Then, even outside Sodom and headed away from the city, Lot's wife, contrary to God's command, *looked back*. She looked back *toward a world* ("the plain") which was very familiar and *away from a world* ("the mountain") which she apparently knew very little or nothing about. Her life had evidently been wrapped up in the affairs of Sodom; and when she looked back, that was the end of the matter so far as God was concerned. It was the climactic act in a life which had been lived involved in the affairs of the world.

It was not God's plan or desire that His child, one of the escaping Household of Faith, should be blighted near Sodom; He had given her full notice of the coming storm – had told her the exact conditions of escape – and had sent His angels for her. Yet she broke one condition of deliverance. She never *went* back (for she is not a type of apostate); she only *looked* back – she abandoned the face set for deliverance – rapture- and a look can reveal a heart. Sodom's destruction never touches her; she was not of the world, and so *that* doom is not hers; she has a judgment all her own. For God knows how to inflict just penalties on His own Servants for disobedience without confounding them in the eternal destruction of the lost. Lot's wife is a type of a Christian missing the rapture and that Christian suffering another type of destruction.

Thus, the Lord's warning to His disciples concerning Lot's wife is simply a warning concerning where involvement in the affairs of this world will lead. Though she did not perish in Sodom, nevertheless, because she "looked back" to the things of the world, she was not finally delivered, but perished in "her portion" with the unbelievers.

3. *Whosoever shall seek to save...lose etc...*

The Lord's warning to remember Lot's wife, His statement relative to saving or losing one's "life ['soul']", and His statement relative to individuals being either received in an intimate manner or turned away in an opposite manner are placed together in Luke, chapter seventeen and refer to the same central truth (vs. 32-36). The experience of Lot's wife (v. 32) would parallel the loss of one's life (v. 33) or being turned away by the Lord (vs. 34-36). And the inverse would be true for an individual keeping his eyes fixed on "the mountain" rather than looking back toward "the plain." His experience would parallel the saving of his life (v. 33) or being received in an intimate manner by the Lord (vs. 34-36).

But one overall thing should be kept in mind - the main distinction here is that the context deals with Christians who are alive at the time of the rapture. Those alive who are *not ready* are *not* taken away to

the air - to the Judgment Seat of Christ - and consequently miss this opportunity to escape the coming destruction.

The Householder and His Servant

Matthew 24:45-51

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Lord's statements relative to one taken and another left (Matt. 24:40-42) lead directly into the thought of a *house* being broken up (vs. 43, 44). That is, both individuals, in each instance, are seen as members of the same house; and the house is broken up by one being "taken away" and the other being "left"

As previously stated, the context is dealing with those Christians *alive* at the time of the rapture; the "dead in Christ" are not in view at this point in time. The "dead in Christ" cannot watch and pray, which is the point of most of the discourse. To watch and pray is something that must be done in *this* lifetime. The "dead in Christ" will be raptured at their prophesied time (this subject will be explored in greater detail later in this book; but for time being, see Rev. 11:18).

Then, the parable of the Householder and His servant continues this same line of thought, showing a servant either being faithful (resulting in his qualifying for the rapture and later being rewarded a position as "ruler") or being unfaithful (resulting in his being left at the rapture and appointed "his portion with the hypocrites").

The picture is taken from an Oriental household which was composed of a lord, or master, and representatives under him to whom responsibility had been delegated. These representatives were stewards of the property and responsible for the house. They functioned directly under and on behalf of their master, and their duties revolved *solely* around the master's wishes relative to affairs of the household.

In Matt. 24:45-51, "Christ" is the *Lord*, or *Master*, over the house; and His "servant" (representing many servants) is the one to whom *responsibility in the house* has been delegated during the time of His absence. This is in perfect keeping with the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) and the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27). The "Man" or "Nobleman", who is the *Lord of the house*, called "his own servants" prior to His departure and "delivered unto them his goods", leaving them with the command, "Occupy till I come" (Matt. 25:14, 15; Luke 19:12, 13). That is to say, during the time of His absence, the Master of the house left the affairs of His house in charge of representatives to whom He delegated authority and responsibility. These representatives were, in turn, to function directly under and on behalf of their Master, and their duties were to revolve *solely* around their Master's wishes relative to *affairs of His household*.

It is a simple matter to understand that Israel cannot be in view, for Israel has been set aside and will remain set aside for the entire present dispensation (which will last approximately 2,000 years). It is during this time that the stewardship depicted in these parables occurs, and it will be at the end of this time that the Lord will return to reckon with His servants on the basis of their stewardship during the time of His absence. Only *after* this point in time will God resume His national dealings with Israel.

Faithful and Unfaithful Stewards

The parable of the Householder and His servant refers to stewardship in the house during the time of the Lord's absence, with the coming kingdom in view. This stewardship involves carrying out the Householder's wishes relative to affairs in the house. The Householder has spoken and the stewards are to act accordingly during the time of His absence. So far as activities in the house are concerned, this is the *only thing* of importance.

The *one requirement* of stewards is "faithfulness" (1Cor. 4:2).

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

The Householder left instructions and every steward in the house is to exercise *faithfulness* therein. The parable of the Householder and His servant shows the command given to a steward by the Householder and the end result of both faithfulness and unfaithfulness by the steward to this command. Faithfulness will result in the steward being *rewarded*, and unfaithfulness will result in the steward being *severely chastened*.

Moreover, the above passage in Corinthians shows what the steward is to be faithful over – the "mysteries of God" – the "meat" and "strong meat" of Scripture concerning the Kingdom of God.

Something often overlooked in the parable of the Householder and His servant is the fact that there is only *one* servant in view throughout the parable. This was made clear by the Lord when He gave the same parable on an earlier occasion, as recorded in Luke 12:42-47. He first spoke of a faithful and wise servant (vs. 42-44); then He spoke of the same servant becoming unfaithful (vs. 45-47): "Who then is that faithful and wise steward...But and if that servant [the same servant, the previously mentioned steward (v. 42)]..."

The only difference in the wording of the text in the two accounts is the use of the word "evil" before servant in Matthew's account. In Luke, the text reads, "But and if that servant..." (v. 45); in Matthew, the text reads, "But and if that *evil* servant..." (v. 48). The servant in both accounts actually *became* an evil servant, though the word itself is not used in Luke. Comparing the accounts, both should be understood in the sense of, "But if that steward, becoming an evil servant, shall...", or "But if that steward should wickedly say..."

The servant thus, in both accounts of the parable, either exercises *faithfulness* or he becomes *unfaithful*. In Matt. 24:45-47 and Luke 12:42-44, the servant remains *faithful* to the charge left by the Householder, resulting in his being rewarded at the time of the Householder's return. In Matt. 24:48-51 and Luke 12:45-47, the same servant becomes *unfaithful* and begins acting in a manner completely contrary to the charge left by the Householder, resulting in his being severely chastened at the time of the Householder's return.

1. Command of the Householder

The command of the Householder to the servant placed over His house was to give those in the house "meat in due season" (v. 45). "Meat" in Scripture, as distinguished from "milk", has a peculiar reference to those things pertaining to the Lord's return and the coming kingdom. "Meat", for example, in Heb. 5:11-14 has to do with Christ exercising the Melchizedek priesthood, a ministry as both King and Priest, reserved for the coming age. In the parable of the Householder and His servant, this is shown by everything in the parable revolving around the Lord's return, with either reward or chastisement (with the kingdom in view) awaiting the servants.

The purpose for the entire present dispensation has to do with the coming kingdom. The call is presently going forth concerning proffered positions as co-heirs with Christ during the coming age, and the present dispensation covers that period of time when fruit relating to the kingdom will be brought forth by those destined to comprise the co-heirs. The "meat in due season", not only in the light of related Scripture but in the light of the text itself, would have to consist of those things relating to the Lord's return and the coming kingdom.

The faithful servant, dispensing "meat in due season", teaches those placed under his care about the Lord's return and proffered positions in the kingdom, in view of producing fruit for his absent Lord. At the time of the Lord's return, fruit will be in evidence; and not only will the faithful servant be positioned as "ruler" (co-heir with Christ in the kingdom), but through his previous ministry in the house others will be brought into this position as well.

Should the servant become unfaithful, the opposite will be true. He will not teach those placed under his care about the Lord's return and proffered positions in the kingdom. There will be no fruit; and not only will the unfaithful servant face severe chastisement, but those placed under his care, failing to bring forth fruit (as a direct result of the unfaithful servant's ministry), will find themselves in similar straits.

The servant in the parable who became unfaithful said in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming." He then began to "smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken" (vs. 48, 49). The word translated "smite" in the Greek text refers to a *blow to the body*. This is the word used in Matt. 27:30 and Luke 22:64 where Christ was smitten on the head and face preceding His crucifixion. The contextual usage of the word in Matt. 24:49 would actually seem to be something similar to what we understand today as a "slap in the face." The servant's refusal to give meat in due season would be, in this sense, a slap in the face for those placed under his care (for he, through his actions, completely disregards the reason for his appointed position, which has to do with their welfare). And his eating and drinking with the drunken, contextually (vs. 37-39), would refer to his manner of living becoming patterned after that of the world, completely oblivious to matters relating to the Lord's return and the coming kingdom.

2. Reward by the Householder

The reward awaiting the faithful servant is to be positioned as "ruler" over all his Lord's goods. Those servants brought into this position are referred to elsewhere in Scripture as "joint-heirs" or "fellowheirs" (same word in the Greek text [Rom. 8:17; Eph. 3:6]). These are the "many sons" Christ is bringing unto glory (Heb. 2:10) to exercise the rights of primogeniture during the coming age. These will be the ones bringing forth fruit during this present age, with a view to their constituting the rulers in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom as co-heirs with Christ during the coming age.

All the foregoing concerning these faithful and unfaithful servants are principles that will be the basis of judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The principles remain the same. But here again, in the context of the verses, we are dealing only with those *alive* at the rapture. It follows, then, that the wise and faithful servant will be raptured and awarded according to these principles. It is a different matter, however, for the evil servant.

3. Chastisement by the Householder

Is the evil servant a Christian? He is indeed a Christian - a saved person. The evil servant is none other than the same servant spoken of in verse 45 whom the Lord has set over His household. The Lord's appointment is not like human ordination, for the latter can be wrong. The Lord cannot appoint a wrong person; nevertheless, whether the servant is faithful or evil depends entirely on how that person performs.

Also, the evil servant calls the Lord, "my Lord" – thus proving the personal relationship with Him. The Holy Spirit does not allow the use of improper terms unless the impropriety is immediately pointed out. The evil servant not only believes in the Lord, but also waits for His return. His fault is in thinking his Lord will tarry. An unsaved person can never think such a thing in his heart. In addition, he is labeled a "servant". The unsaved are not servants of the Lord.

In spite of the above reasons, there are still many people who hold the view that on the basis of his (1) conduct, (2) his judgment, and (3) his punishment, this servant is unsaved. Those who hold this interpretation argue these three points as follows:

(1) If he is saved, how can he ever beat his fellow servants and eat and drink with the drunkards? In reply, I would say in fact that a saved Christian is still capable of committing all kinds of sins after he is born again. If you have any doubts, just look around in your own Church, or perhaps even in the mirror. Please remember that the person who committed the heinous sin of incest in 1Cor. 5 was a born-again believer.

(2) The Lord appoints this evil servant his portion with the hypocrites. In reply, I would say that this simply indicates that he as a believer is as hypocritical as are the unbelieving hypocrites. It is made even clearer in Luke 12, where he is appointed "his portion with the unbelievers". That he is a believer is shown that two distinct groups are shown here – the unbelievers, and the one who shares his portion with the unbelievers.

(3) "Cut him asunder" is a phrase to be taken literally in the sense that this evil servant is "cut asunder", that is, he is *separated* from the group that is taken, and he is therefore left behind to endure his "portion" with the unbelievers. Compare Matthew's account with that found in Luke 12:47-48, (see below) and you will see that the evil servant shall be "beaten with many stripes". To be beaten is not to perish for all eternity, for the Lord's sheep shall never perish in eternity (John 10:2-28). Thus, this evil wise servant is weeping and gnashing his teeth, because he is only too aware of what has happened - that he has been left behind, and that he will endure suffering under the coming six seal judgments.

I want to call your attention to the resultant action of the unfaithful servant who adopts the attitude of a delay in the second coming of the Lord. In verse 49, we read that the evil servant begins to smite his fellow servants. To me, one of the most painful experiences of a faithful servant of the Lord is to have to suffer the abuse of his fellow ministers because of his faithfulness to the doctrine of the coming again of

our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To this day I cannot understand how a person can say he is a Christian, that he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, that he loves Him and wants to honor and glorify Him, and at the same time turns right around and says he gets sick and tired of hearing about this same Lord coming back again.

I have noticed in my ministry, brief and limited though it may be, that a preacher can be an adulterer, a thief, a partaker of the things of the world, a teller of questionable stories, and be dishonest in regard to his debts, yet few if any other ministers will say anything about it. But let a man of God be faithful to the command of our Lord and cry out, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him", and then watch the other servants of the Lord begin to criticize and demean. The unfaithful servant who says, "My Lord delayeth His coming", smites, in various ways, the faithful servant who says, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." They may smite:

- 1) By intimating that he is mentally incapacitated and by saying there are certain degrees of mentality to which the doctrine of prophecy appeal, and that the intelligentsia are not swept off their feet by future promises of the Lord.
- 2) By innuendoes and insinuations and oftentimes outright falsehoods; and prevailing upon other Churches not to consider him for pastor or for any other ministry.
- 3) By saying he is eccentric, unbalanced, and riding a "hobby horse" of prophecy.
- 4) By refusing to have any fellowship with him and discouraging other ministers from so doing.
- 5) By saying he doesn't teach the Bible, if he is evangelistic; or by saying he is not evangelistic, if he is a Bible teacher.
- 6) By accusing him of having departed from the historic faith of the fathers, when the fact of the matter is, it is the one who says, "My Lord delayeth His coming", who departs from the historic faith.
- 7) By combining with other unfaithful servants to boycott the entire ministry of the faithful servant.

And his eating and drinking with the drunken, contextually (vs. 37-39), would refer to his manner of living becoming patterned after that of the world, completely oblivious to matters relating to the Lord's return and the coming kingdom.

The *falling away* of this wise servant begins when one says in his heart, "my Lord delays in His coming again". These are teachers and preachers who no longer look for His second coming, as well as those who no longer believe that He is coming again in His literal body of flesh. This is the cause of the apostate Church in these last days. For by doing away with a literal second coming and a literal king, the popular amillennial teacher can then do away with a literal kingdom.

The next step in their fall is to smite their fellow servants. That is, they begin to attack repeatedly other pastors and teachers who teach and believe the Word of the Kingdom. Then, as they continue to apostatize themselves, they fall to the *lowest* level where they begin to eat and drink with the drunken.

This last state is a state of worldliness, i.e., identified with the world in every manner of lifestyle, including idolatry.

God then tells us what is to become of these rebels. First, He is going to surprise him at His coming. He obviously is left behind at this rapture. Why is it so certain, you may ask? Very simply put, he cannot be raptured, because the Lord says He is going to "appoint him his portion with the unbelievers". Where are the unbelievers? It is certain they are not raptured; therefore, he is left on the earth to suffer with them, *but only in the portion the Lord has ordained*. Clearly, then, we can see that the Wise and Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant together are a picture of "one shall be taken, and the other left".

This word "appoint" is the Greek word, "tithemi". In this instance, perhaps we could translate it "ordained, or committed". This is the same word translated "put" in the following verse:

Matthew 14:3

For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

But remember that this evil servant is in a special class of the wise, because he once was wise, and should know better, but he has succumbed to the world, and has drifted away from the Lord. The Lord has a special punishment for this wise but evil servant (at this point in time) which is designed to not only mete out special punishment for his desertion from the truth, but hopefully will cause him to repent from his error, and return to the obedience to God's word. This punishment is twofold: not only is he left behind at this rapture, and has to endure at least the coming first six seals of the coming Great Tribulation, but he will suffer much more during this time than the less wise who really did not know any better. Thus we have the account in Luke 12:

Luke 12:47-48

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. ⁴⁸ But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Thus, we see that this wise but unfaithful servant shall suffer more during the upcoming Great Tribulation with the hope that he will repent and be restored. The simple foolish virgins will suffer, but not so severely. Remember, all of these are the Lord's sheep, and the suffering is designed to bring them to repentance. If, however, this wise but evil servant does not repent, then the Lord will deal with him subsequently in a much more severe manner. This eventuality will be discussed in later in this chapter. Also, please note that the above verse is a principle of judgment, and this is certainly not the only application of this principle. The same principle will be applied to the "dead in Christ" at their judgment.

As a parting comment on this parable, I wish to point out that, in the usual course of events, pastors and teachers are called upon by the Lord to "give meat in due season" to the immature believers. Most of the pastors and teachers I see in today's Church don't even know about the "meat" doctrines, much less do they teach them. Scripture says *"From whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48)"*. The parable says that the *reason* his Lord has *made him ruler over his household* (pastors, etc) was that he (the pastor) might give them meat in due season. Much responsibility has been given pastors and teachers called by God. Consequently, I fear that many of today's pastors and teachers will be judged severely at the Lord's return. This is indeed a pitiful situation; but the Lord is not only righteous, but merciful.

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS (Matt. 25:1-13)

This is the sixth parable in our series of seven that teach the events surrounding the rapture of the Church. It was recorded and placed in the Word immediately after the Parable of the Wise and Faithful Steward. With this position in the Word and its title, it will soon become obvious that God is giving additional and consequential information about those chosen from the living to be included in the bride of Christ.

Once again, it is vital to note that this parable concerns only the rapture of the living; all the parables thus far in the Mount Olivet Discourse concern only those who are alive at the time of the rapture. Only the living can still watch, and the warning to watch is paramount in each of these parables thus far.

This parable teaches the basis on which the living included in the bride will be selected. This is very precious in God's eyes, since He wants all who will devote the time to seek first the kingdom of God to understand the requirements necessary to attain unto the bride, and thus be motivated to lead godly lives in obedience to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The Parable

Matthew 25:1-13

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. 13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

The Interpretation

Most Bible teachers in the past have interpreted the five wise virgins of this parable as those who were saved, and the five foolish as those who were lost. Today, most conservative pastors and Bible teachers persist in believing and teaching this false but popular view. Still others, not necessarily in the conservative group of Bible teachers, preach a different false view that presents the wise as representing the Church and the foolish as representing Israel. Before we begin to expound on the correct interpretation of this parable, it will be helpful to see these two false interpretations exposed in the light of the Word.

The First False View: Aren't the Foolish Virgins Unsaved?

Considering the first false view of this parable: the number *five* in Bible typology always is emblematic of *grace*, and wherever you find it, you will find the *grace* of God working. It is made up of two other numbers, three and two. *Three* speaks of manifested deity, i.e. the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and *two*, the number for witness [the law required a minimum of two (sometimes two or more) witnesses to establish a truth (1 Kings 21:10; Matt. 26:60; Rev. 11:3)]. Thus, by God's use of the number five to identify both groups, He is declaring that they are *all saved by grace through faith* in the One who finished the work on the Cross. God placed His stamp of approval on this work by raising Jesus up on the *third* day, which was witnessed to, and confirmed to us, by the Holy Spirit and the Word and the Blood (in the following verse "two or *more* witnesses"):

1 John 5:6-8

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

Furthermore, in this parable the matter of virginity obviously cannot be taken literally. The virgins instead represent we who are re-created in Christ. They point more to the idea of our being hidden ones than to the idea of chastity, for married women may also be chaste. The term "virgins" cannot be applied to either the Jews or the unbelievers; only Christians can adopt this term.

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

I will mention a few iron-clad evidences to overturn the interpretation that the unwise virgins are unsaved.

- (1) These five foolish ones are virgins. Even through verse 11, they are still termed virgins. Throughout the parable the Lord never called this matter into question; on the contrary, He continually recognized this as a fact.
- (2) They *all* hear the call to go forth to meet the bridegroom. The unsaved would never be able to go forth to meet the bridegroom, much less even hear His voice.
- (3) "And at midnight there was a cry made" – The cry is to all the ten virgins. The archangel surely will not call the unsaved mistakenly, nor will the Lord use any word incorrectly.
- (4) Oil in their lamps: even though it is granted that there is no oil in some of the *vessels*, nevertheless they all had oil in their *lamps*. Oil signifies the Holy Spirit, and hence these foolish virgins must possess the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and are, accordingly, saved.
- (5) The difference between the five wise and five foolish virgins lies in their conduct, not in their nature – since all of them are virgins with no divergence of true or false - the only distinction is in their being either wise or foolish; this, as we have seen earlier, pertains to Salvation of the Soul, not salvation of the spirit.

(6) "buy for yourselves" (vs. 9) – To the unsaved, it cannot be a matter of "*buying*" but one of "*asking*", since grace is freely given. Only to the saved can the word "buy" be used; it means paying a price.

(7) If the five foolish are unsaved, would the five wise say, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you"? If these foolish are truly unsaved, these five wise cannot make any excuse but must pay any cost to help; for how can they stand by and do nothing for the lost?

(8) "Watch therefore" (vs. 13) – To be watchful requires life. If the five foolish are not saved, they cannot be exhorted to watch; instead, they must be urged to repent and believe.

I hope these arguments will enlighten the reader as to whether the foolish virgins are saved. If the reader is still not convinced, more arguments will be advanced in the verse-by-verse exegesis which follows.

The Second False View: Aren't the Foolish Virgins Israel?

In the second false view of this parable, the foolish virgins cannot be Israel for at least two reasons:

(1) Israel is never pictured as a virgin, but rather as the adulteress wife of God the Father (Jer 3:18). The word virgin means a maiden, or one who is unmarried. This implies that she is clean and chaste, and is qualified to become a bride.

(2) Where the Church of the Firstborn is the bride of Christ, Israel is the wife of God and as such cannot, as an unsaved nation, be raptured with the Church. In our parable, we will see that both the wise and the foolish are raptured, but at different times. (Perhaps I elicited an immediate questionable response; however, I choose for purposes of clarity not to address this issue here. This question will be addressed later in this writing. I only remind you at this point that Scripture is very clear in typology that there will be a firstfruits harvest, a main harvest, and a gleanings harvest.)

(3) By its location in the Olivet Discourse, we can correctly deduct that this parable concerns Christians, not Israel or the Gentiles.

Verse by Verse Comments

In all these parables, believers today devote themselves almost entirely to the problem of "saved or unsaved", not realizing that there is the equally important question of "inheriting the kingdom" once they have been saved.

There are two outstanding time breaks in Matthew 24 and 25. The first one is introduced by the word, "now" (Matt. 24:32). This one introduces the parable of the fig tree which pertains to Israel as a nation – the budding fig tree signifying Israel becoming a nation once again. This took place May 14, 1948. The next break in time is Matt. 25:31. The King James Version leaves out the Greek word that should have been translated, "but" or "now", thereby bypassing the effect that the word was intended to have.

This verse is introduced in the Greek by the two words, "*hotan de*", which being translated mean, "but when." This is called in grammar a disjunctive conjunction, the word, "but", being disjunctive in that it

announces a new time, separate and distinct from that which has preceded. The word, "when", is a conjunction which joins the subject matter of that which follows with that which precedes, though separate and distinct in time.

A key expression to the understanding of the entire Olivet discourse is to be found in these two words, "*hotan de*." This manifests a time of transition marking a different time period entirely from that which it follows. The word, *de*, means, *but... now... moreover ... however*. The word, *hotan*, means, *when*.

In language the average layman can understand, this means that Matt. 24:32 to 25:30 has to do with one appearing of the Lord, whereas Matt. 25:31-46 refers to an entirely differently time and appearing. So Matt. 24:32 to 25:30 has to do with Christ's appearance in the air when He calls His own to meet Him, and Matt. 25:31-46 speaks of the time when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to the earth. That means the first period mentioned above has to do with Christians and the Church, and the second appearance has to do with His revelation unto the Gentiles, and also the Jews.

Notice carefully that the word, "then", refers to the time that the fig tree buds and while the leaves are still tender (Matt. 24:32); also to the days like unto those of Noah; also when some of His servants will be faithful and others unfaithful (Matt. 24:45-51); also to the time of the Judgment Seat of Christ (Matt. 25:14-30). The time designated by the word, "then", has nothing whatever to do with the Jews or the Gentiles, only the Christians and the Church.

Consider the following comments of certain terms used in this parable.

"ten" - "The word "ten" is the number of ordinal perfection – completeness as pertaining to the earth. It implies that nothing is wanting, that the number and order are perfect, that the whole cycle is complete; therefore, it means ALL – no more, no less. "Ten servants" means all of His servants; "ten pounds" signifies all of His money; "the ten commandments" signifies all of His commandments. You will note that with the completion of numbers up to ten you have a new beginning like 10's, 20's, 30's, hundred's, thousand's, million's, etc. If there is any one thing the number ten means it is perfect completeness.

But, according to the context of the Lord's soon coming, these ten represent *all* the Christians who are alive at the time of the Lord's coming at the Pre-tribulation Rapture.

"Virgins" - The word "virgin" in the Bible is used to signify unmarried, clean, chaste, pure, and cannot apply to the nation of Israel at all because Israel is the adulterous wife of God who is playing the harlot with many lovers. The whole book of Hosea is a story of Israel, the adulterous wife of God. Israel is never likened unto a virgin or a bride. By implication, numerous passages of Scripture reveal the Church in the relationship of a virgin bride to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Bridegroom. Nor is the word "virgin" ever used in the Scripture to signify unsaved people. The Holy Spirit uses words like harlots, dogs, swine, and goats to characterize the lost.

These virgins are real virgins - not just pretenders. Jesus Himself calls them virgins; and they represent only the righteous, the saved, the redeemed, true believers, those who hold to the true faith. They are the children of God, and this parable is a parable concerning the virgin bride and the Bridegroom – that is, concerning Jesus Christ and Christians.

The expression "ten virgins" simply means all of the Christians alive at this time. What our Lord is saying is that at the time of His appearing for His Church, all Christians alive on earth will be likened unto ten

virgins. If five were lost and five were saved, He would have said the kingdom of the heavens is likened unto five harlots and five virgins, or like unto five goats and five sheep, or like unto five measures of tares and five measures of wheat, or like unto five measures of leaven and five measures of flour. But the Holy Spirit never mixes or confuses metaphors or symbols.

The contention that part of these virgins are saved and part lost cannot be true, because the Lord does not gather the saved and lost before Him at the same time. The judgment of the saved at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the judgment of the lost at the Great White Throne Judgment are separated by at least a thousand years.

As indicated, the five wise virgins had an extra measure of oil and the five foolish virgins did not. Most Christians believe (mistakenly, I think) that the five wise virgins represent the saved and that the five foolish virgins are the unsaved. Actually, the Scripture strongly suggests that all ten are saved. All are called virgins and all have burning lamps which is indicative of salvation. The Lord's teaching in this parable is not about those who will go to heaven versus those who don't, but rather instructs us that the unwise virgins didn't have the EXTRA measure of oil like the wise virgins did. And thus, when the bridegroom came, the unwise were not ready to go with him. Since this parable is a picture of the Church in waiting for the Lord to Rapture her for the wedding, this brings up quite a startling implication, doesn't it?

Verse 1

"Then Shall". The very first word in the parable of the ten virgins locates when the events in the parable occur. This is a direct reference back to the preceding parable where we are told in verse 44: *"Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."* So we see this parable deals with the sudden and secret coming of the Lord for living Christians. In verse 1, the expression "Kingdom of Heaven" is used to inform us that its contents deals with *rewards* and not initial salvation

Verses 2-4

In verses 2-4 we see the major difference between the two groups. The division into the wise and the foolish is obvious. But the foolish took no oil *with them in their vessels*; i.e. they took oil in their lamps, but no extra oil in separate vessels. Contrary to this, the wise had a *double* portion of oil - the first portion was in their lamps, and the second portion was in their vessels. Oil in the Scriptures is emblematic of the Holy Spirit. Thus, all ten were saved; i.e. had received by faith the knowledge (gnosis) of Jesus Christ, which is the first portion of oil.

However, the five wise virgins had a *double* portion of oil, which is emblematic of the preparedness a life of obedience to the Holy Spirit brings to the believer. The foolish had the *infilling* of the Holy Spirit that all Christians receive by *faith* when He comes within to dwell in them. The wise, however, also had the *fullness* of the Holy Spirit, which is given in response to the *obedience* of the Christian in denying himself, taking up his cross, and following the Lord.

The verses below give us a historical view of the Church in the first century. Many in that Church knew the kingdom truths, since the Lord had expounded them over and over, and the Apostle Paul later devoted almost his entire ministry to teaching them (he even later referred to his emphasis on teaching the kingdom truths as my gospel):

Romans 16:25-26

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, ²⁶ But now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations [Gentiles] for the obedience of faith:

According to this verse, this mystery was unknown to the saints of the Old Testament; but when Jesus came, He began revealing this mystery. We see this same truth in Hebrews, where this mystery is called "so great salvation":

Hebrews 2:3

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

Notice in the above verse in Romans that the reward "to stablish you according to my gospel" is conditional upon "the obedience of faith". The revelation is only given to one who is obedient to deny self, take up his cross, and to follow the Lord. For without this initial obedience, one cannot even be His disciple (and accordingly, learn of the truths of "so great salvation"). Is it any wonder, then, that so few are aware of it?

Verse 5

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept".

The first century Christians in less than 70 years won a great deal of the known world of that day to the Lord. They were fervent, and on fire, to a degree that the Apostle Paul tells us that the gospel was preached to every creature which is under Heaven (Col. 1:23b). But something happened - they lost their zeal and fell asleep. They had looked for the Lord, and He did not come. Their expectations were lulled into complacency. Historically, this occurred in the third century when Romanism took over the church; when the tares were sown; when the leaven was placed in the three-fold doctrine of Christ; when the mustard bush was changed into the great tree.

The traditional translation of verse 5 is questionable. Most translations say that *all* the virgins were sleeping. But a careful Bible expositor would point out that actually the Greek text presents us with an "either - or" situation here. That is, the five wise virgins were doing one thing, and the five unwise were doing something quite the opposite.

In the New King James translation the verse reads: *"But while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."* The bridegroom tarrying of course refers to the time and place Jesus will be (where He presently is), at the right hand of God the Father interceding for and acting as the High Priest for the Church while it is still in the world. The above translation and others like it obviously leads one to believe that all ten virgins were lying around sleeping. Actually, before we even look a little deeper into the original Greek meanings of the passage, when you really think about it, this doesn't even make good common sense. The parable has already made it very clear that five of the virgins were wise. That being so, it would be totally paradoxical and contradictive that the wise would be sleeping right along with the unwise, rather than being alert and expectant of the bridegroom's coming, which is what one would conclude if the five wise virgins were indeed wise. We shall see that this conclusion is exactly what the original Greek inferred.

Like many other Scriptures, the key to correct understanding of this passage is slightly hidden in certain key words of the Greek text in this passage. The word for "slumbered" comes from the root word "*neuo*", a word which means "to nod". Most Greek scholars say it means "to nod", as by implication in falling asleep. But it can also mean not necessarily "nodding" in the sense of sleepiness but rather in the sense of approval. I'm sure the reader knows very well what I mean, and likely do it yourself at certain times. For instance, when a preacher is speaking the truth to a congregation, often many in the group will voice their approval by saying "AMEN", but also often some do the same thing by simply nodding the head up and down, meaning "YES". This is what the five wise virgins were doing. Nodding their approval and desire for the bridegroom to come. They wanted to see Him. They were beckoning Him to come by nodding their heads approvingly. Get it? If you do, just nod your head and say "Hmm!", the way I did the first time I heard about this.

The second part of the verse refers to what the five *unwise* virgins were doing - "*...and slept*". Actually, it should read "*or slept*" rather than "*and slept*". In my very limited understanding of Greek sentence structure, whichever conjunction is used in converting Greek into English depends upon the context of the sentence. Sometimes "and" should be used; sometimes "or" should be used. "OR" should be used here. Why so? Clearly, the apostle Matthew is giving us a contrasting view of each of the two groups of five virgins, not a similarity perspective among the ten virgins. They were not all "slumbering and sleeping". They were either beckoning approvingly (by nodding) as they waited for the bridegroom, OR they were lazily sleeping. The wise were doing the former; the unwise were doing the latter. Remember, the five wise virgins had the extra measure of oil. And what does this "extra measure" mean?

An Extra Measure of Oil

Well, it means to be ready. It means to be beckoning. It means to be nodding expectantly and approvingly of the coming of the Lord. It means to be Biblically up-to-date. Christians need to be diligent in their search to clearly understand God's Word. Often the leaders in many churches are just as ignorant as the laity on certain subjects. This is due to their theological minds already being made up, maybe even locked due to specific erroneous beliefs established in seminary training. All of us, pastors and congregations, need to be modern Bereans, which means to be continually studying the Bible in depth to see if what we believe and have been taught is in line with what the Bible in fact teaches. And, based on solid, Holy Spirit-directed analyses, when we find real differences between what is said and taught as compared to what we formerly believed, we need to be ready to change our minds, repent, and go another way. Please do not think that I'm being critical of pastors just to be cynical. God bless them. But I think too often many haven't studied their Bibles on their own enough and been willing to change their minds about certain deeper-truth Scriptures: Scriptures such as is being presented here.

Who Goes at the Initial Rapture?

The brief understanding that I have thus far shared with you here is perhaps insufficient to fully change your mind about what this parable teaches. Of course, this raises the question of who will be raptured at the coming of the Lord! Will all believers go at the same time? Or, will some be "left behind"? Do only the wise go? That is, only those with the extra measure of oil? The two types of virgins makes it appear that this is the way it will be. The wise will be those Christians who are really looking forward to Christ's coming and they are gladly anticipating it. These will be "studied up", "confessed up" and "prayed up". The "wise" are Philadelphian believers, that part of the Church described in Revelation 3:10 which Jesus

said He would keep from the "*hour of trial*", the only Church of the seven described in Revelation given this promise.

Revelation 3:10

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

There is definitely a strong contrast among believers in the Church today. Numbers-wise, it appears that the majority of the Church is, if not totally asleep, at least slumbering. Luke-warmness, apathy and carnality best describe the evidence we see in most churches today. Revelation 3 addresses the Laodicean church which many expositors believe describes our age. I believe this description pictures the largest portion of the modern Church. This is not to say that the majority in the Church who profess Christ as Savior and Redeemer are unsaved. Rather, it is to say that the majority is "unwise". Most are not ready nor are they gladly anticipating the coming of the Lord. Their "oil" reserves are low or non-existent. They are lying around slumbering and sleeping and/or have dirtied their "garments" through carnal living.

In most churches I've been involved with over the past years, both as member and/or guest, have scorned and rejected my attempts at prophetic input - for example, that there is sound Biblical basis that the Lord is coming soon and that we should be lifting up our heads because all Scriptural predictions and their fulfillment indicate that our redemption draws near. The majority do not want to hear this, including pastors. In fact, I could truthfully even say "particularly pastors". "Strong prophetic teaching is divisive", has been a typical response expressed to me.

The coming of the Lord becomes, through watchfulness (wakefulness), both a deterrent and an incentive. It rebukes sin of every kind and inspires us to the deepest consecration and devotion. Not only is blessing promised to the prepared but likewise loss is threatened to the unprepared, as seen in the verse below:

Revelation 3:3

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Christ's coming will be sudden and unexpected to the watchful and unwatchful alike. But the warning is that He will suddenly come as a *thief* to the careless. Though surprised, the watchful will not be unprepared. To the unwatchful, however, His coming will be like the visit of a thief, in its resulting loss and sorrow (Matt. 24: 42-44, 48-51; Mark 13: 32-37; Luke 21: 34-36).

How dare we deny such solemn warnings? If there is nothing for us to fear at the coming of the Lord, if all will have the same experience, then such warnings are not only meaningless; they are false and misleading. Some might object that such warnings have in view the loss that will be sustained by the careless Christian after the rapture, at the judgment-seat of Christ. It is true that the Christian's unfaithfulness will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and that for all such failure he will suffer loss. But the important point of many of these Scriptures is that, for the *living believers* at least, judgment will begin at the rapture. This is clearly brought out in the parable of the virgins. Their judgment began at the appearing of the bridegroom. As the reward of the watchful and faithful will begin with their participation in the rapture, so the judgment of the careless will begin with their rejection from the number of the first raptured and their consequent participation in some (not all) of the horrors of the tribulation.

Verse 6

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him".

In verse 6 they all heard the midnight cry. This midnight cry is the voice - if not the actual voice of the Lord - then perhaps the voice of the archangel – or *both*.

It is *not* a figure of speech representing the 19th century preachers, when they began to preach the second coming. The word "midnight" is always used as a type in Scripture to establish two coming events. These are the "choosing of the bride of Christ" and the "judgments of God". Both of these are in view here [remember that these parables are also the amplification of "the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Matt. 25:40)]. The one *taken*, is taken in rapture to the Judgment Seat of Christ and subsequently to the wedding feast. The one *left*, is left to endure a portion of the Great Tribulation. I will demonstrate this more fully in a later chapter.

But they all heard His voice, and accordingly, they all arose. When they heard His voice, they *all knew what was next*. This is a most important point to bear in mind, as we shall later see.

The Choosing of the Bride (from the Living – those from the Dead are Chosen at a later time)

To understand the choosing of the bride, we must first study the typology that teaches of the relationship between Boaz and Ruth. In Ruth 3:1-10, Boaz is presented as a type of Christ in the choosing of His bride. This happens after his field has been harvested (type of the rapture) and brought to the threshing floor for the purpose of separating the wheat from the chaff (type of the Judgment Seat of Christ). However, before this occurs, Ruth (a type of the bride of Christ), a *Gentile* and near kinsman of Boaz, was instructed by Naomi (a type of the Holy Spirit through the Word) to go to Boaz, while he was at the threshing floor during the night, and to ask him to become her kinsman redeemer (this included marriage). Further, Naomi instructed her that before she went, she must first cleanse and anoint herself (type of all sin having been confessed and the obtaining of a double portion of the Spirit). Then, she was told to go and lie at the feet of Boaz and do whatever He says. This action shows, in type form, the faithful and wise who have knowledge of the kingdom. This is so, because the feet of Boaz are a type of the feet of Jesus Christ.

Again, we see this picture of those who come to the feet of Jesus to learn of Him and to seek *His* will in the story of Jesus at Martha and Mary's house (Luke 10:38-42). Recall that *"Martha was cumbered about much serving"* (vs. 40), but Jesus gently rebuked her, and instead commended Mary because she *"had chosen that good part"*, which was to *"sit at Jesus' feet, and hear His word"* (vs. 39). In Martha we see a type of the foolish virgins, who try to serve the Lord through their own self-efforts; whereas, in Mary, we see a type of the wise virgins, who in contrast seek to have knowledge (epignosis) of Him, and as a result do His works as He leads.

Finally, the Scripture tells us that this happened at "midnight", which shows that Ruth, representing the bride of Christ, was spiritually awake (watching for the coming of the Lord) while the other maidens (the rest of the saved) were asleep. Likewise, the choosing of the Gentile bride of Christ will occur immediately after the midnight cry (the rapture). Secondly, the word "midnight" is also used in the Old Testament in connection with judgment. The judgment of God on Egypt was at midnight (Exo. 11:4; 12:29). Egypt is not only a type of the world, but specifically the world during the coming Great

Tribulation (see Rev. 11:8). Therefore, since the judgments of God fell on Egypt at midnight, so will they fall on the world during the Great Tribulation at midnight. Midnight then, is used in this parable as a type of the time of the end, which includes the rapture, the choosing of the bride and judgment on the earth.

We see in verses 7-10 the events that will occur on earth immediately preceding the rapture. Their purpose here is to lead us to identify and understand that which is needful for the believer to *enter* the marriage chamber.

Verse 7

"Then all those virgins arose". At this point, all the virgins are awake and are all aware that the rapture is imminent. They have all "heard the cry".

Some would say that at this point all ten virgins were then raptured. But this cannot be, for not until verse 10 do we then see *"the bridegroom came"*. Verse 10, then, is the moment of rapture, (*"when your Lord doth come"* – Matt. 24:32). Beforehand, in verses 8 and 9 the foolish virgins suddenly become aware of that which they lack - the extra oil in a vessel – and this must be acquired here on earth, where they can go *"to them that sell, and buy for yourselves"*.

Some would say that all ten of these virgins represented Christians who had already died, since the live people on earth at this point were dealt with in *"the one shall be taken, the other left (vs. 41)"*. To this I would remind you, once again, that the whole point of the parable is made in verse 13, where, in summation, Jesus says, *"Watch, therefore" - those who are already dead can no longer watch*; this should be self-evident. For the dead, their race has already been run. Rather, this parable, and the one preceding it (The Wise and Faithful Servant) are in actuality an *amplification* of *"the one shall be taken, and the other left"*, because we are warned to continue to watch in both places (vs. 24:42; 25:13).

The outcry will be sufficient to wake up all of the five foolish virgins. The picture is that the five wise virgins are awake and alert, but when the midnight cry occurs, all of the virgins that are asleep will come awake. It should be noted that the word *"those"* refers to the virgins who were asleep. They woke up and trimmed their lamps. The trimming of the lamp is the cutting of the dead part of the wick away so the oil can flow through without being impeded. When the foolish virgins' lamps were trimmed, they realized that they were about out of oil because their lamps were quenched. They did not have the extra measure of oil, which is the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 8

"Give us of your oil" - Here, the five foolish virgins recognized that they were not ready to meet the Lord: firstly, they "woke up" to the urgency of the impending rapture when they heard the midnight cry; and secondly, when they frantically begin to trim their lamps, they realize their lamps are going out. (Whatever fervor they may have possessed to follow the Lord, and to meet His requirements to deny self, take up the cross, and follow Him, and thereby to obtain the double portion of His Holy Spirit, [the oil] had long ago been diluted, or even evaporated entirely, by *"the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in [Mark 4:19]*, and thus, too late, they discover their terrible mistake – they had been unfaithful servants).

They are now all fully awake and aware of what is about to happen (i.e. the rapture). The next actions on the part of each, the wise and the foolish, will be an automatic response to where their hearts are, "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Luke 12:34-37

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning (the lamps of the ten virgins); ³⁶ And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return (from heaven) from (because of) the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh (the midnight cry), they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat (the wedding feast), and will come forth and serve them.

In the above verses we clearly see the Lord describing the necessary requirements for each Christian to be raptured. They must be watching. Notice that while in these verses the Lord warns them to have their lights (lamps) burning, in our parable the foolish virgins had let theirs nearly go out. Those in the above verses who "wait for their Lord" (had oil in their vessels) are *ready* when He "comes and knocks" (the midnight cry), and "they open to Him immediately" ("they that were ready went in with him to the marriage"). Their reward for "opening immediately" is that He will "make them to sit down to meat" ("they that were ready went in to the wedding feast").

Luke 17:31-36

In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away (seek to save his life); and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back (seek to save his life). Remember Lot's wife (she sought to save her life). Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

In Matt. 24:17-18, the Lord's warning to those on the housetops and in the fields is to the Jews only, that they may *physically* escape to the mountains. But the warning above warning in Luke is to Christians.

In the above account in Luke of "one shall be taken, and the other left" our Lord makes a very significant point: The basis that determines who shall be taken, and who shall be left, is whether they have lost their lives (souls) here, or if they have sought to save their lives here. This "losing of the life here" is what produces the extra oil in the vessel.

This is a secret rapture ("I come as a thief"). It will come suddenly, and without warning (to the world). Those whose treasure is in the Lord will automatically respond and go out to meet Him. Those whose treasure is the world, will, like Lot's wife, turn back and look with longing at the things in this world that they treasure, and will be reluctant to leave their "stuff". These shall be on the housetop, and will look down to take their stuff away; these shall be in the field, and will look back to their property in the house. Thus, by their own automatic actions - the response by each to where his treasure is - each will suddenly and positively separate themselves into the group to which each belongs: either wise, or foolish - ready, or not ready - spiritual, or carnal - having oil in their vessels, or having no oil.

Remember Lot's wife! She looked back, and she was not delivered. Although she did not perish with those in Sodom (the world), she nevertheless perished – only in a different manner. She was turned into a pillar of salt. She endured a different, but equally fatal, judgment.

There has been much controversy over whether Lot's wife was saved or lost. Some have said she was lost and some saved. The difficulty of this argument arises because of the spiritual ignorance of our modern-day Bible teachers who can see no farther than initial salvation.

Lot's wife is a type of all the Christians who will lose their reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Let us examine a few points that teach this. She believed God would destroy Sodom. She believed God when he told her to flee from the city, and the plain. She believed in coming judgment. To all these things she gave evidence of her belief by leaving. But, she was carnal and shallow; she had lost the upward look. She had set her face toward Heaven and then disobeyed by looking back. She had loved her place in the city and longed for one more look. She typifies all the Christians who put their hand to the plow and then look back, to those that are numbered in the household of faith, yet still in love with the world. She lost her life by being turned into salt, even as many Christians of today have already become castaways.

The Lord God has left irrefutable evidence to this truth. He turned her into salt, that she may be a testimony to all generations. Salt in the Scriptures is an emblem of the covenant of grace. Never is it meant for evil. To the contrary, it is the opposite of leaven, which is a symbol of evil doctrine.

Salt was needed for a preservative as well as making food palatable. It was used in Levitical sacrifices (Lev. 2:13) as well as a symbol of a covenant (II Chron. 13:5). Jesus said, "*Ye are the salt of the earth.*" Over and over again, Scripture is consistent with itself. Thus, by turning Lot's wife into salt, He was saying in effect, "She is saved, but she has become a castaway to all rewards." This is why Jesus, in speaking of what will happen in the latter days, paused in the middle of his discourse and cried out, "*Remember Lot's wife*" (Luke 17:32). He was speaking to Christians about their eternal reward and warning them that they must be faithful to the end.

Thus, those who are ready will be raptured and will be granted entrance into the wedding feast; those who are not ready will be left behind as "pillars of salt". And don't be deceived by the popular false teachings to the contrary: they are all Christians!

The Double Portion of the Oil

I hope in the following section to give you a deeper understanding of the oil, which we have already noted represents the Holy Spirit. He dwells in every regenerated person. A Christian, even a babe, has the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eze. 36:26-27; Eph. 1:13; Rom. 8:9; 2Cor. 13:5; 1John 3:24; 1John 4:13). The Lord therefore dwells in all Christians by His Spirit.

But oil in the *vessel* means more than the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; it speaks of being *filled* with the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit is received at the time of regeneration, but the filling of the Holy Spirit comes through continual seeking and following the Lord after regeneration. Each believer has the Holy Spirit, yet not all have the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Thus we have the command in Ephesians (why would it be a command if all already possessed it?):

Ephesians 5:18

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Please consider the following passage in Colossians very carefully. Here Paul, with incredible eloquence, expresses his heartfelt desire, (and thus God's also) that every Christian would understand this mystery (which he elsewhere terms *my gospel*), and live their lives accordingly, in order that they may qualify for this rapture, and the events following:

Colossians 1:9-29

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; ¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light...

²¹ And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled ²² In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: ²³ IF YE CONTINUE IN THE FAITH grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; ²⁴ Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church:

²⁵ Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; ²⁶ Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: ²⁷ To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: ²⁸ Whom we preach, WARNING EVERY MAN, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: ²⁹ Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Can you hear the cry of Paul's heart? Here he is pleading, and warning each Christian that they have a *hope* of glory; but it all depends on whether "you continue in the faith" and "be not moved away from the hope of the gospel". How many preachers and pastors teach the wonderful promises in this passage, and then fail to see that they are all conditional!

Each believer has the Holy Spirit, yet not all have the fullness of the Holy Spirit. A vessel is something other than the lamp. Yet this is not the emphasis here. Since oil is a liquid, it has to be contained in a vessel. God's will is for us to be filled to the full, not just having oil in the lamp. In order to realize this, neither trimming nor decorating the lamp will be of any use, because God looks for extra oil in the vessel. Yet the believer's attention is usually drawn to the outward appearance of the lamp. The less oil one has, the more assiduously he takes care of the appearance. Nevertheless, trimming can never be a substitute for the oil.

We imagine that receiving oil once is enough, but God desires us to receive it twice. The second time is different from the first, in that in the first instance God gives freely, whereas in the second instance He demands a price to be paid. If anyone refuses to pay the price – denying himself and seeking earnestly –

he will not be given the oil the second time. Hence, the warning: watch, and pray, that you may be counted *worthy* to escape

Luke 21:36

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Thus, Jesus clearly warns us here that we must watch and pray always, (be filled with all wisdom and knowledge concerning the coming kingdom and the requirements for entrance therein, and taking heed thereto) in order that we may make this first rapture, and thereby escape the terrible judgment coming on the world, and to stand before the Son of Man (at the Judgment Seat of Christ, where those who qualify for this rapture - the wise virgins - will be rewarded with entrance into the bridal chamber).

Watch therefore, and pray always.

Vigilance is the watchword that God's Word plainly requires. There is no other way to stay on course and to keep looking up for Jesus to come. Daily prayer life is the first step in watching. He is not talking about looking at the sky when He says, "Watch", but He is talking about living in a constant awareness and eager anticipation of His soon coming. Those who are not looking in this manner for His soon coming will not be taken when the rapture finally comes. This is clearly seen in Hebrews:

Hebrews 9:28

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin [the sin question was dealt with at His first coming] unto salvation.

The salvation referred to above is the Salvation of the Soul, not of the spirit. He is talking about your heart condition. A person that is ready for the Rapture has his heart set on Him and being in His eternal presence. Prayer becomes something absolutely wonderful when you are watching for Him. The world's pleasures are empty at best. We live by grace through faith and the Blood cleanses us every day from resorting to the life of the flesh. By obedience to His Word, we are able, through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, to resist temptation and to live a holy, separated life.

The Word of God is God's sanctifying authority; no believer can stay in that sanctifying power without the Word. We should immerse ourselves in truth with absolute longing for its life-changing power. Jesus prayed, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*" (John 17:17). Those with unsanctified lives have no chance of going in the Rapture. When your soul is sanctified to Him, it means your personal life is dead, your fleshly appetites have been crucified, and your heart is set to do His whole will. Being full of the Spirit is the daily delight of a Rapture-ready believer. You might say, "I'm not ready to escape anything." That is your choice. For me, I know that, "*For to me to live is Christ, and to die (or be raptured) is gain.*" (Phil. 1:21). To go in the Rapture is the grand prize. In fact, Paul stated that very thing:

Philippians 3:14

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling [upward calling – the rapture] of God in Christ Jesus.

Thus, these foolish virgins are those who are LEFT BEHIND ("and the other left").

Most Christians, having been immersed in the doctrine of Balaam, find the fact that many will be left behind at this Firstfruits Rapture quite offensive, and completely reject this notion. As a result, the all-important warning from the Lord Himself to watch, and pray always, is rendered ineffective to them, because they believe it does not apply to them. And so it will be unto them according as they believed. Such a masterful deception from the father of lies!

Mark 7:13

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Spiritual foolishness may not be readily discerned by the world, but the tarrying of the Lord is the acid test. At the beginning, both the wise and the foolish receive the same light. And the latter may therefore ridicule the former for being cumbered about with carrying extra oil. How many are fit to be raptured at first, but render themselves unfit later on! This is due to the delay of the Lord. Indeed, it is the evil servant who thinks that the Lord will delay His return; just the opposite, though, is the foolish virgin who imagines that the Lord will come earlier!

Verse 9a

"But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." Here we see the foolish asked the wise to share their oil that was in their vessels. But the wise refused their frantic request for two reasons. Obviously, first of all, if the oil were able to be shared, then no one would have enough to enter the marriage chamber. Secondly, it was a different kind of oil that could not be *given* away - it had to be *bought* with a price. That price was the losing of their lives here on earth, that they may gain their lives at the Judgment Seat. Therefore, as the first portion of oil represented the *sealing* of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of their *spirits*, so the second portion represents the *power* of the Holy Spirit to produce the coming salvation of their *souls*. As the first portion is freely *given* the moment one believes, so the second portion must be *bought* by trading. For as the first portion of oil guarantees life for all eternity, (entrance into eternity), so the second portion guarantees millennial life – life for the age (entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven). In our text, the foolish virgins did not realize this truth until it was too late.

Oh, the weeping and gnashing of teeth Christians will do when they learn (for they *will all* hear His voice – (*"Then all those virgins arose"*)) that the bridegroom has come, and they have been left behind to endure a portion of the Great Tribulation (at least the first six seals, as will be demonstrated later).

Verse 9b

"But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." The foolish virgins were told that they must go and *buy* from those who sell, in order to obtain this second portion of oil. The meaning of this verse is a mystery to the popular Bible expositor. He cannot conceive of the Scripture telling the five foolish virgins - whom he thinks are lost - to go and *buy* salvation, when Ephesians 2:9 declares that salvation is a free gift without works. However, the second portion of oil is not salvation (gnosis), but rather the full discernment (epignosis) of the Word, which pertains to the inheritance. To buy and sell means to sell daily a portion of your life in order to buy more of this wisdom and full discernment of the Word (strong meat). This can be described as one who is willing to lose more of this life daily in order to receive more of the deeper knowledge of the Word (double portion of the Holy Spirit). This price is not only a daily

surrender and commitment to the Lord, but also willingness to labor in the Word. Jesus Himself referred to this when He said, "*he that loses his life for my sake will find it*".

Or to put it another way, "he that sells portions of his life daily, can replace it by buying portions of the Word" (double portion of the Holy Spirit). When one begins to buy this double portion, he comes to understand that which is described in the Lord's rebuke of the Laodicean Church:

Revelation 3:18

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

The "gold tried in the fire" is wisdom, about which Solomon had much to say in Proverbs:

Proverbs 3:13-18

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. ¹⁴ For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. ¹⁶ Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. ¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

The "white raiment that thou mayest be clothed" is the wedding garment that represents the righteous acts of the saints. It is the robe that all who have their souls saved at the Judgment Seat Christ will win; this grants them entrance into the wedding feast. In the Parable of the Wedding Feast, it is the robe that the one wedding guest was lacking, and this lack caused him to be cast out.

"And anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" – this speaks of the spiritual eyes the Holy Spirit gives a Christian who enters the Matthew narrow way. These spiritual eyes allow him to gain a deeper insight into the Word of God, that they may grow thereby. It is given to the Christian who "seeks first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness". It is described by Paul as "the eyes of their understanding being enlightened", and it allows a Christian to "know what is the *hope* of the riches and glory of his inheritance" – the inheritance that he hopes to win at the Judgment Seat:

Ephesians 1:18

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

It is this *hope* that causes a Christian to purify himself:

1 John 3:3

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

It is this *hope* that saves us (Salvation of the Soul):

Romans 8:24

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

We can see the "second portion" of the filling of the Spirit in Paul's prayer for the Ephesians:

Ephesians 3:16-19

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

If this being "filled with all the fullness of God" were automatic for all Christians, then why did Paul pray that this might come about for the Ephesians?

Verse 10

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut." Here we witness the actual rapture of the five wise virgins. They were ready; they had the oil in their vessels; they qualified for Salvation of the Soul, and they were raptured to the Judgment Seat of Christ, where they were given glorified bodies, and given rewards, which included entrance "to the marriage", that is, to be part of the Bride of Christ. The door to the marriage feast was then shut. The five foolish Christians coming later are not granted admission to this very exclusive club, although they will rule and reign with Christ if later found qualified. These five foolish virgins, later qualified to rule and reign with Christ during the millennium, are described as "the virgins, her companions":

Psalms 45:13-15

The king's daughter [the Bride of Christ] is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

Thus, we see the overwhelming importance of being "ready".

Verse 11

"Afterward came also the other virgins." Here we see the pitiful cries of the foolish virgins who have realized the terrible loss of being "left behind". With simple study, you can see that they indeed did not go with the wise virgins. They had been "Left Behind", and the truth of this is quite different from the scenario portrayed in the popular current series by that name.

Verse 12

"I know you not". The Lord replies that He does not know them. But, you might say, how can the Lord say He does not know them, if they are saved? We need to examine this answer of our Lord very carefully.

"But he answered and said" – The word "but" shows that the answer is unusual and quite unexpected. In Luke 15:22 the same word indicates how totally unthought-of, unhoped-for, and unexpected by the

prodigal son were the father's words to his servants. The word "but" here shows that the "know you not" is not an ordinary not knowing. The Lord certainly knows all who are saved. (2Tim 2:19; Gal. 4:9; John 10:14). Then this denial of knowing them must mean something different.

This denial by the Lord has a special meaning; it is a denial of knowing the five foolish virgins for a specific purpose. The Greek word used here for "know" is *eido* (Strong's 1492). To quote from Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary:

"oida (the perfect tense of *eido*) expresses the fact that the object has simply come within the scope of the 'knower's' perception; thus in Matt. 7:23 'I never knew you' (*ginosko*) suggests 'I have never been in approving connection with you' whereas in 25:12, 'I know you not' (*oida*) suggests 'you stand in no relation to Me'".

Thus we can see that the word *eido* is recognizably employed to mean to approve or stand in relation to a person. So this denial, as used in verse 12 under consideration means "you do not stand in an approved relation to Me"; therefore I deny (reject, disavow) you (as pertaining to the issue of entrance into the "marriage" – being part of the Bride).

The denial ("I never knew you") of Matt. 7:23 is somewhat different; that denial is in reference to entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. The denial in our present parable of Matt. 25:12 is in reference to the Bride of Christ – the marriage. There will be those in the Kingdom of Heaven who are not part of the Bride of Christ. Here again, this is in opposition to popular teachings that all Christians are part of the Bride of Christ.

The Bride of Christ is the Church of the Firstborn who are called out at the firstfruits rapture; it also includes those of the "dead in Christ" who are raptured at a later time (this rapture of the "Manchild" is discussed at a later time.) The workers in the vineyard in the Parable of the Labourers were judged in a specific order – "beginning from the last unto the first" (Matt. 20:8); that was the main point of the parable. And in this parable, we see that the living are indeed judged first.

This is the "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phi. 3:14) that Paul said he strove mightily to attain. Notice that Paul strove mightily, that he might know Jesus:

Philippians 3:10

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

This is the intimate knowledge of Christ that comes from striving to obtain the extra portion of oil. It comes about by keeping His commandments:

1 John 2:3

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

Jesus denies that he recognizes them. "I know you not" simply means that He does not recognize them. They are so caught up in the world that they look like the world.

Those raptured alive subsequent to this crucial time may be granted the privilege of entering the Kingdom of Heaven, but they have lost the privilege of belonging to that highest order of the Bride of Christ ("and

the door was shut"). These could perhaps be described as the "Church of the Aftercomers" (my term). These foolish virgins, in the Kingdom, but not part of the Bride, can be seen in these Old Testament portrayals of the wedding ceremony of the King:

Psalms 45:14

She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

Here we see a description of the Bride in her "raiment of needlework" (Rev. 19:8-9), and her companions the virgins (today we would refer to them as bridesmaids).

We see the similar picture in Genesis when Rebecca left her home to be married to Isaac (a type of the Bride of Christ):

Genesis 24:61

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

Notice this verse in Revelation:

Revelation 19:9

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

We mistakenly assume that all who are called to the marriage supper are part of the Bride of Christ. But in the chronology of the Book of Revelation, the Bride was already selected in Rev. 4:4-11 (a picture of the results of the Firstfruits Rapture - this is discussed in detail in later chapters). The five foolish virgins are too late to be part of the Bride, but not too late to be wedding guests. An example in Scripture of the distinction between guests and the bride is seen in John's description of the wedding at Cana; notice the same terminology:

John 2:2

And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

Jesus and His disciples were called to the marriage; but obviously they were not the bride.

That there is a hierarchy among those in the Kingdom of Heaven is seen in the Parable of the Soils: "some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matt. 13:23). This hierarchy can also be seen in other parables:

Faithful and wise servant - ruler over all his goods (Matt. 24:47)

Good and faithful servant - ruler over many things (Matt. 25:21)

Good servant - ruler over cities (Luke 19:19)

The subject of this apparent hierarchy is covered in greater detail in a later chapter.

Verse 13

The key to this parable is in this last verse. Here, our Lord does not warn all Christians that they need to be born again, but rather to watch for His coming. This necessitates making themselves ready by buying and trading for the second portion of oil. Also, by its location in the various parables, we can see that this parable is an amplification of the Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant, and also an amplification of the "one shall be taken, and the other left".

This Parable of the Ten Virgins teaches the *basis* on which a believer will be chosen as a part of the bride of Christ, and it also teaches the cutoff time after which no *live* Christian coming subsequently can be a part of this highly exalted position in the Kingdom of Heaven. By putting both parables together, we learn that he must be faithful unto the end, and he must be wise. Finally, this wisdom that he must have is revealed as being the *double portion* of the Word (the Holy Spirit).

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." This is the point of the whole parable. Watch, that you may be ready, as were the five wise virgins.

The Lord commands us to be watchful; He does not urge us here in this parable to be regenerated and be saved. The "they that were ready" in verse 10 are those who have watched. Thus, "ready" and "watch" are joined into one. To be "ready" means that there is no unfinished business and one is therefore ready to be reckoned with daily. To "watch" means to so live as to always be aware of the soon coming of the Lord, knowing that we could be raptured and face a reckoning with the Lord at the Judgment Seat at any moment. We believers should daily be prepared for reckoning. The Lord may come at any time. The word "ready" here is concerned with self as to whether or not there is anything left undone. The word "watch", on the other hand, has its direction towards the Lord; it signifies a waiting to meet Him at any time. In order to be ready and watchful and waiting, we need the fullness of the Holy Spirit. It will not do if we depend on ourselves, for if we do it is likely that very soon we will be weakened and become like the five foolish virgins. But if we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will spontaneously bear fruit to the glory of God.

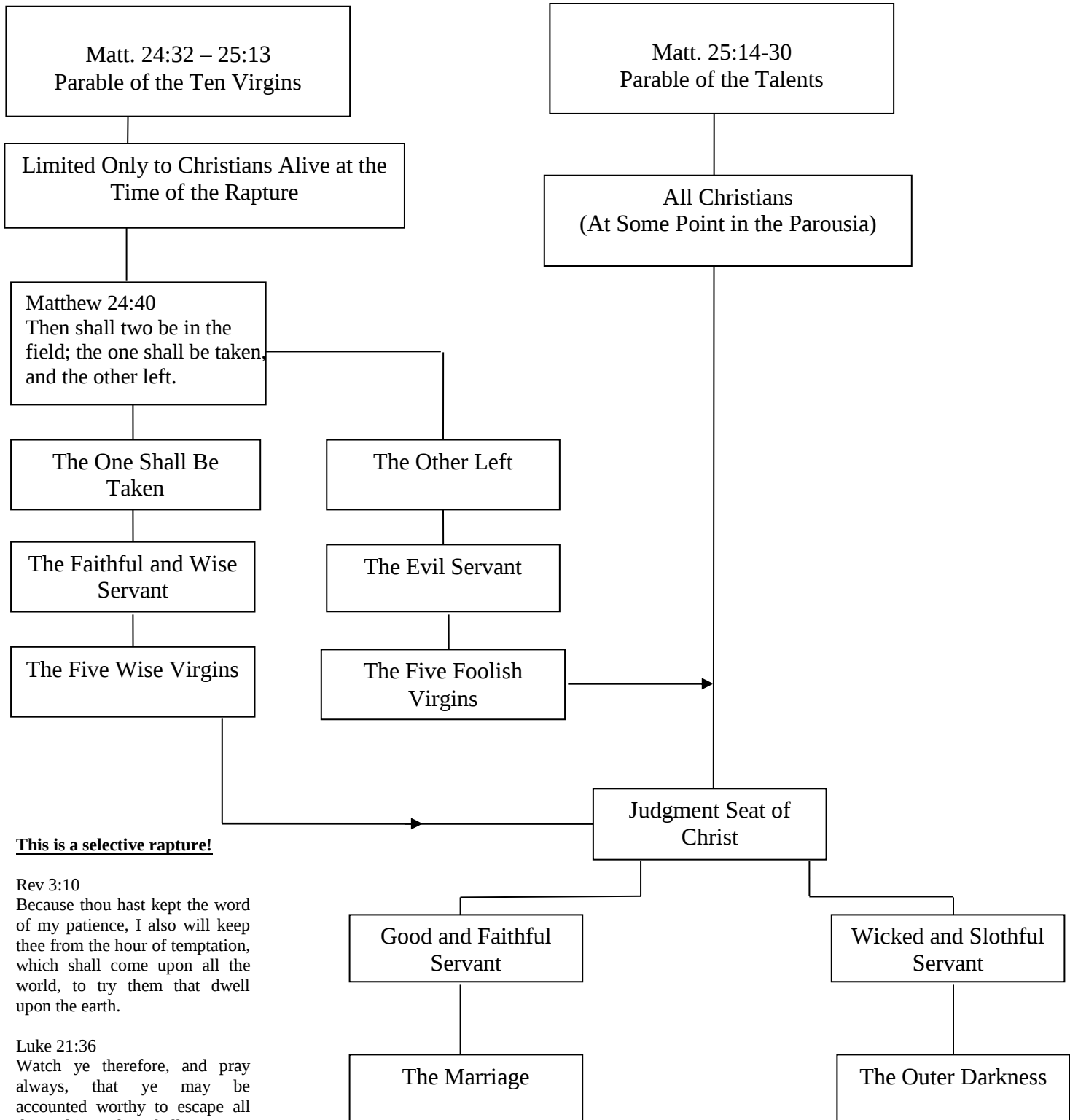
"Watch" is one of the great comprehensive words of the Bible. *Watch* oneself; *watch* for opportunities; *watch* for dying souls; *watch* Satan; *watch* God. Watchfulness is acute alertness exercising every faculty for God. But it must be accompanied by specific prayer: *"Pray that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man."* Watchfulness invokes all our powers for God; prayer invokes all God's powers for us. But more than that, watchfulness devotes our works to God; while prayer devotes our very selves.

He who is truly watchful often feels he is not yet entirely ready. He does not trust in his own self. This is a sign of true humility.

Yet what does it avail if we have such prophecy but are not watchful? Will it not be tragic if we have prophetic knowledge and still suffer loss in the future? Be ready, for the Lord only looks into our vessel to see if the double portion is there. Be watchful, because we know neither the day nor the hour; this motivates us to watch, for if we knew the day and hour, the flesh would tend to put off watching until the last possible moment.

The charts on the following pages may be helpful to picture the events of Matt. 24-25.

The Christian Section of the Events of Matthew 24 - 25



The Parable of the Ten Virgins

A Correlation of Verses: Let Your Lights Be Burning

Luke 12:35-37

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

Matthew 25:1-13

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Revelation 3:14-22

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

PARABLE OF TALENTS AND THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

To Receive a Kingdom

Matthew 25:14

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

Luke 19:12

He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

It is the nature of a trust that a day must come for a report of the trust to be rendered; and so, after a prolonged period during which His servants trade with the talents he had entrusted to them, Jesus says that "the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them" (Matt. 25:19).

The parable of the talents presents an overall scope of the present dispensation, with particular emphasis on events surrounding the Lord's return and the kingdom which follows. This parable covers the entire period from the Nobleman's departure to his return – that is, from our Lord's Ascension to the Second Advent; and so embraces all who have conducted His business on earth for nearly two thousand years. It covers the period, and the only period, in which the Church of Christ exists, and so is a comprehensive history of the work and judgment of the Church.

The parable of the talents in Matt. 25:14-30 and the parable of the pounds in Luke 19:12-27 are similar in most respects; however, two essential differences distinguish them. The first was the basis on which each was given the talents or pounds. The second difference was between what was actually given (i.e. what the talents were and what the pounds were).

I will offer the definition of the talents and the pounds here, and I will expand upon this definition throughout this section.

The Talents

In the parable of the talents, the Lord delivered unto His servants "all His goods". This refers to all of His business, including the gifts of the Spirit. The Parable of the Talents is obviously a picture of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Since at the Judgment Seat our *works* will be examined, then it follows that the talents are the works which God has given us to do. These also include the *opportunities* the Lord gives us to work.

Our Lord's motto for every disciple is - To Every Man His Work.

Mark 13:34

For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

The language in the Parable of the Talents is very similar to that of Mark 13:34, and I believe it is describing the same event. According to Mark, the talents are the *work* the Lord has given each disciple. And so ample and complex is this work that it is called ministering service (Matt. 23:11), household

service (Rom. 14:4), responsible service (John 18:36), worshipping service (Rom. 12:1), succoring service (Heb. 3:5), priestly service (Phil. 2:17), and, as here, bond service. *God calls a soul to work the moment that He calls it to life.*

It Is Our Work

When our Lord laid down His Divine task, He entrusted it - not to angels, nor to kingdoms, nor to apostles only - but to you and me. It *"is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants"* - authority for what? - *"to each his work."* Millions of souls have to be saved, and myriads to be sanctified: countless truths, popular and unpopular, are to be sown over the world: whole continents must receive the light: - and each of us is a designed cog or flywheel in this mighty mechanism of God. Before our creation in Christ - it may have been in eternity past - God chose us for it:

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

It is Our Share

Christ reveals it is an individual allotment. Not, to each *some* work, nor, to each *a* work; but, *"to each his work."* This is an exquisite revelation. Each can give a glory to God which no other being in the universe can - each can do a work for God which from eternity past has been allotted to him alone. How this ennobles and dignifies the saved soul! God has allotted the toil of the whole Church so as to rest in wise distribution upon each of us individually.

It Is Our Task

The size of the task is not stated. It may be a great work, or a small work: the supreme point is that it is *my* work; and as such I *can* do it; I *ought* to do it; and at the Judgment Seat I will be asked if I *did* do it.

Matthew 25:19

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

Luke 19:15

And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Christ would have us do a small work which He commanded, rather than a large work which He did not; *for all planned work is necessary to the building, and planned work only.* A man's character is what he is in the dark; a man's work is what he does in the dark: and if I do *what* God tells me, and *how* He tells me, I am doing the most supreme thing possible to my soul: and a soul's utmost is always magnificent.

The woman described below did a very small work unto the Lord. We don't know if this was the entire extent of her delegated works (probably not); but notice how the Lord lauds her for this simple task:

Mark 14:8-9

She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

We are weaving our own glory-robos. The "righteousnesses" described below are our righteous works; it is not the robe of righteousness we all receive upon being born again. Note that the wife (bride) has made *herself* ready:

Revelation 19:7-8

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Revelation 22:12

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

It Is His Vineyard

The work awaits for each of us; we see this from the Parable of the Laborers:

Matthew 20:3

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

Matthew 20:6-7

And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

It is apparent that the works begin when "the man hires us"; that is, when we are born again: then we are sent into the vineyard. But some training or sanctification may yet be required before we are released to do this particular work.

(1) It possible to *find* our works. Our Lord would hold no soul responsible for a work unless with the work was granted the power to discover it: *but He alone can tell us what it is*. His foundations were laid in eternity; His plans for the superstructure were drawn up in eternity also; in eternity He allotted each task to each of us individually by name:

Acts 9:6

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Paul asked the question what the Lord would have him do, and the Lord graciously replied. What the Lord answered Paul, He will also graciously answer us, because He is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). If a person is not sure of the work the Lord has for him, he should ask. We are to ask Him, and we will receive; seek, and we shall find.

Matthew 7:7

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

(2) It is possible to *do* it. Christ has not planned work outside our abilities ("*to every man according to his several ability*" [Mat. 25:15]), or beyond our opportunities: He knows what He made us for, and what we can do best, and He has planned that we should do *that*. He made us in nature with a view to what we should become in grace: He chose our cradle, and He will choose our grave, and He chooses all the Christian work we are to do between.

(3) It is possible (I think) to *know* that we are doing it. How is that? God will open the way by circumstances: He will satisfy our conscience that it is *right* work: He will convince our judgment that it is *the* right work for *us*: He will confirm it by the approval of mature Christian friends: and He will establish it with definite blessing.

(4) Then having found it, we must persist in it until He tells us to drop or change it. One kind of firefly, in the tropics, glows *only so long as it flies* – the moment it rests, it darkens. Wesley's motto - "All at it, and always at it" - is the secret of the luminous life.

Matthew 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

It Is Our Master

"*To each* [Christ gave] *his work*": therefore I am doing it for Him. "Our conversation", says Tertullian, of the early Christians, "is that of men who are conscious that the Lord hears them." When the world puts its ear to our work, it should hear in it all - like the ocean in a seashell - the great Eternity to which we hasten. "*The love of Christ constraineth us*" (2Cor. v. 14): how this transmutes the daily toil, and the household drudgery, into the golden labor of a better world. "For years", Mr. Moody said, before he died, "my prayer has been that God will let me die when the spirit of revival dies out of my heart."

It Is Our Increase

Are any of us shirking our allotted task? The shirking of the man who prays, and the praying of the man who shirks, is equally an abomination to God. Very soon we shall have to lay all work down. We "*must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*" (John 9: 4). Task every faculty; strain every power; break new ground; put no limit to your toil except that which God put when He made you. Let it be said of each of us:

Revelation 2:19

I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Included in these goods are the empowerment by the Holy Spirit to conduct the Lord's business, for "without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). These are the gifts of the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:7-16

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. ...11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Here we notice the *increase* in the talents.

These are *grace* gifts, and in verse 7 above we see that they are not given equally, but are given "according to the measure of the gift of Christ". In the verse below we see again that these gifts "differ according to the grace that is given to us:"

Romans 12:6

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

And these gifts are distributed unequally among the saints, and are given according to the ability of each:

Matthew 25:15

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

1 Peter 4:10

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

These gifts are given to profit the entire body of Christ, and are given according to God's will:

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

These gifts of the Spirit are included in the talents. They are given to enhance each man's personal service to the Body of Christ. We are responsible to the Lord to use these talents to provide increase and edification, etc., to the Body. *"To whom much is given, much shall be required"* (Luke 12:48); thus, the Lord expected five more talents from the one who was given five talents, and two more talents from the one who was given two talents.

Thus we see that some are given larger tasks than others (five talents, two talents, and one talent). But the reward hinges on whether the individual task given was completed (not how big the task was). The same reward was given to the one who was given five talents as to the one who was given two talents.

Matthew 25:21

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

The Pounds

The pounds, however, are given to affect our own personal sanctification; that is, our own personal growth in the fruit of the Spirit. The pound given each man represents the initial measure of faith that is given to each man. From this initial gift of faith, each man is expected to produce the fruits shown. In the measure that each man allows the Holy Spirit to produce this fruit in him, he will be rewarded with ten cities, five cities, etc.

2 Peter 1:3-11

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

From the initial gift of faith, we are to give diligence to add to this faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Notice that each man is given an equal measure of faith:

Romans 12:3

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Thus, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, each man will be held responsible and will be rewarded according to how much he allowed the Holy Spirit (through obedience to His leading) to produce:

In the Parable of the Talents – personal service – good works – to build up the Body of Christ.

In the Parable of the Pounds – personal sanctification – fruit of the Spirit.

However, it is my belief that an abundance of the "fruit of the Spirit" will automatically be accompanied by the good works. They go hand in hand.

John 15:8

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Jesus gave the parable of the pounds to His disciples in a single discourse near the close of His earthly ministry while still in Jericho, *before* going up to Jerusalem, in order to dispel thoughts which they had concerning the kingdom being established in days immediately ahead (Luke 19:11); and the parable of the talents was given to His disciples in a larger discourse *after* they had been to Jerusalem in order to provide additional light upon kindred parables. One parable was given preceding Christ's entry into Jerusalem as the nation's King, anticipating His rejection; and the other parable was given following His entry and rejection, only two days before the people of Israel crucified their Messiah (Matt. 26:1, 2).

The overall framework of the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds is the same. A Nobleman (Christ) called His servants (Christians), delivered something to them (talents or pounds). He then departed into a far country to receive a kingdom (into heaven to receive the kingdom that is presently in the *physical* possession of the incumbent, Satan), leaving His servants with the promise that He would return (as King, in *physical* possession of the kingdom).

During the interim, between the time of the Nobleman's departure and return, His servants were to exercise faithfulness to the responsibility with which they had been entrusted (the work given to each man).

Then the day finally arrived when the Nobleman returned, as He had promised; and at that time His servants were called before Him to give an account. Those servants who had exercised faithfulness in their calling were *commended* and then *rewarded* by being placed in positions of power and authority in the kingdom which the Nobleman had acquired during the time of His absence. Those servants exercising unfaithfulness in their calling, though, experienced *rebuke*, *rejection*, and *chastisement*. No position in the Nobleman's kingdom awaited them.

Reason for Departure

Jesus revealed His approaching departure to His disciples on more than one occasion (Mark 2:19, 20; Luke 5:34, 35; 19:12; John 14:2, 3). In accordance with Old Testament prophecy, He was to return to the place from whence he had come (back to heaven) and remain there for a specified period of time (2,000 years). This was occasioned by the people of Israel rejecting and crucifying their Messiah.

Christ "came unto his own ['own things' (neuter pl. in the Gk. text)], and his own ['own people' (masculine pl. in the Gk. text)] received him not" (John 1:11). His "own things" refer to those things which were

rightfully His: the Davidic throne, His Own throne, the domain over which He was to rule, etc.; and His "own people" refer to the Jewish people, His brethren according to the flesh. Christ suffered at the hands of His Own people *because of His Own things*, things which rightfully belonged to Him. *All* the sufferings of Christ, after some fashion, were associated with the "things" to which He came.

1. Rejection by His Own

Jesus was born "King of the Jews", He presented Himself to Israel as the nation's "King", and over His head at the time of His death the accusation read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:2; 21:1-11; 27:37). This is the accusation which the Jews presented when they took Jesus to Pilate: "*We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King*" (Luke 23:2). Pilate, after questioning Jesus and listening to what He had to say relative to this accusation, responded, "*So You are a king?*" Jesus then said, "*You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world...*" (John 18:33-37, NASB).

Jesus though had clearly stated to Pilate that His kingdom was *not* "of this world", referring to the present world system under Satan; and from this statement Pilate apparently understood that even though a King other than Caesar may have been present, He posed no threat to the Roman Empire, which was "of this world." Thus, Pilate found "in him no fault at all" (John 18:36, 38).

Pilate brought Jesus forth to the Jewish people as "the King of the Jews", seeking to release Him. The people, though, cried out for the release of Barabbas, an imprisoned robber and murderer, rather than Jesus. Pilate then released Barabbas and scourged Jesus. The Roman soldiers were then allowed to array Christ as a mock King, and Pilate, in this fashion, presented Christ once again to the Jewish people with the words, "Behold the man [the man arrayed in this ignominious fashion (a crown of thorns and a purple robe) as the King of the Jews]" (John 18:39-19:5).

The religious leaders of Israel, seeing Christ arrayed in this mock fashion as their King, cried out for His crucifixion. Pilate though continued seeking His release; and after another conversation with Christ, Pilate brought Him forth to the Jewish people again with the words, "Behold your King!" (John 19:6-14).

The people of Israel, though, continued to cry out for His crucifixion. This prompted the question by Pilate, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests responded, "We have no king but Caesar." Their response placed Pilate in the position of having little choice but to acquiesce to their demand (v. 12); and Pilate, though having tried to wash his hands of the matter, delivered Jesus over to be crucified (Matt. 27:24ff; John 19:16ff).

With the words, "We have no king but Caesar", the Jewish people sank to a new low in their long history. They had rejected their King; they were crying out for His crucifixion; and (in order to affect His death after this fashion) they were claiming *allegiance to Caesar*.

God Himself, in the person of His Son, stood rejected in their midst. Not only had He been rejected, but the people were crying for His execution by crucifixion. They wanted the Man Pilate had brought forth as their King subjected to the most ignominious form of execution known to man. Crucifixion was reserved for the worst types of slaves or criminals in the Roman world; and, because of Deut. 21:23, it was considered by the Jews as the most horrible of all forms of death: "...he that is hanged is accursed of God."

When the Chief Priests claimed allegiance to Caesar in order to affect Christ's crucifixion, they could not have placed Israel in a position more diametrically opposed to God's purpose for calling the nation into existence. Israel was God's firstborn son, the nation in possession of the rights of primogeniture (Exo. 4:12). Israel had been called into existence to be the nation which would not only rule over the Gentile nations but also the nation through which these same Gentile nations would be blessed.

Israel was to occupy this position within a theocracy. This was the purpose for the existence of the theocracy in the Old Testament, and this was a purpose which would have been realized had Israel not rejected Christ at His first coming (delaying the realization of this purpose until the time of His return). The people of Israel though had turned the whole thing around by rejecting their Messiah and placing themselves in subjection to Caesar. There could be no theocracy apart from Christ; and those who were supposed to rule in the theocracy were not only calling for Christ's crucifixion but they were subjecting themselves to the pagan ruler of the very people over which they were called into existence to rule.

2. A House Left Desolate

The pronouncement concerning Israel's desolation had been made immediately prior to Christ's crucifixion, and the entire matter of what was about to occur had been graphically outlined eight centuries earlier by the prophet Hosea:

Hosea 5:13-6:2

When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. 14 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. 15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

Hos 6:1 Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

The name "Ephraim" is used to collectively represent the entire *nation of Israel* (Jer. 31:9). Ephraim in this passage is sick, wounded, and goes to the Assyrian (also referred to as "king Jareb", a figurative title of the *King of Assyria*) for help. However, the Assyrian is unable to affect a cure (v. 13).

The "Assyrian", as evident from the verses immediately following, refers to the *final subjugator of the nation of Israel* who will appear during the Great Tribulation. The reference is to *Antichrist* who will arise out of a country within the territory covered by the northern segment of the old Babylonian kingdom after its four-way division following Alexander the Great's death in 323 B.C. (Dan. 8:8, 9). This segment of the kingdom was Assyria, and because of this the Antichrist is referred to as an *Assyrian* several places in Old Testament Scripture (Isa. 10:5; 14:25; Micah 5:5). Also note in a basic Old Testament type covering the matter that the king of Egypt during Moses' day was an Assyrian (Isa. 52:4).

Ephraim's only help could come from the One Who had wrought the sickness – the one who had caused the wound. It was the Lord Who had placed Ephraim in this condition. It was the Lord Who had left the house desolate; and the final subjugator of Israel, rather than helping, will only produce a further

desolation (Dan. 9:26, 27). He will be "the abomination that maketh desolate" (Dan. 12:11), bringing an already desolated house into a ravaged condition unparalleled in history.

The Lord said, "I will take away, and none shall rescue him" (v. 14). Only the One Who placed Ephraim in this condition can affect deliverance. That is, Christ is the One Who pronounced desolation upon the house of Israel, and He is the *only One* Who can remove Israel from this condition. Apart from the One Whom the nation rejected and crucified, Israel has no hope. Apart from their Messiah, the people of Israel would remain in this condition (their present condition) forever.

Deliverance, though, is coming, but first two things must transpire: 1) The One Who had come, been rejected, and caused Ephraim's sickness must return to the place from whence He came ("I, even I, will tear [cause the sickness] and go away [return to heaven]"; "I will go and return to my place"); 2) the people of Israel must then acknowledge their offense (the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah) and seek The Lord's face (vs. 14, 15).

Christ has returned to heaven. He returned to heaven forty days following His resurrection, and He is going to remain in heaven until those who offended Him acknowledge their offense and seek His face. The time when they will seek His face will be during "their affliction", the coming Great Tribulation (v. 15). They though will not actually acknowledge their offense until Christ returns, for this was done in *His presence* and it will be acknowledged in *His presence* (Exo. 2:23-25; 3:6-8; Gen. 44:16-45:3). The same scenes which witnessed events surrounding the beginning of Israel's desolation will also witness events surrounding the ending of Israel's desolation.

The Jewish people, during the time of the coming Great Tribulation, are going to seek the Lord "early" (v. 15). Under the reign of Antichrist, because of the worldwide anti-Semitism which will exist, conditions will deteriorate into a chaotic state unparalleled in the history of the human race. Conditions will become such that apart from the Lord's intervention through shortening those days, man would literally destroy himself (Matt. 24:21, 22). It will be during those days that the Israelites, as the Israelites in the brickyards and fields of Egypt under the reign of the Assyrian during Moses' day (Exo. 2:23), are going to turn to and call upon the Lord; and the Lord, as during Moses' day, is going to *hear* His people, *remember* His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and have *respect* unto them (Exo. 2:24, 25).

These things will occur "after two days" - after two thousand years. It will be "in the third day", in the third one thousand-year period, that Israel will be raised up to live in the Lord's sight (Hosea 6:2; 2 Peter 3:8). The time designated by the two days begins at the time of Israel's "offense", the nation's resulting "sickness", and the return of Christ to His "place" in heaven. Thus, Christ will remain in heaven for two days, two thousand years; and at the end of this time He will return. Then, on the third day, the third one-thousand-year period, Israel is going to be raised up to occupy her proper place in the Lord's sight. That is, at the end of two thousand years, dating from the time the Jewish people rejected and crucified their Messiah, Israel is going to finally realize the reason for the nation's inception during the days of Moses.

Purpose for Departure

Hosea 5:13-6:2 deals with the reason rather than the purpose for Christ's departure almost two millennia ago. The purpose for His departure is dealt with in other Old Testament passages.

Moses, for example, went to his brethren as their deliverer, but he was rejected. He then departed into and dwelt in the land of Midian, the far country, and remained there as a shepherd for a lengthy period of

time. And prior to the day God called him to return to his brethren, he took a Gentile bride (Exo. 2:11-3:10).

Moses in Midian, between the time of his departure and return, typifies Christ in heaven, between the time of His departure and return. And as Moses was a shepherd, so is Christ a Shepherd, the Great Shepherd of the sheep; and as Moses took a Gentile bride during this time, so is Christ presently taking a Gentile bride.

This same truth can be seen in the experiences of Joseph. He went to his brethren, was rejected, and was sold for the price of a slave (thirty pieces of silver). He then found himself removed from his brethren, in Egypt, in the far country. While in Egypt, prior to the time he was reunited with his brethren, he took a Gentile bride (Gen. 37-45).

The same truth is also set forth, though after a slightly different fashion, in the experiences of Isaac. Sarah, his mother, had died; and Abraham, his father, sent his eldest servant into Mesopotamia, to his own people, to acquire a bride for Isaac. After the servant had completed his mission, acquiring the bride, Abraham remarried (Gen. 23-25).

This points to God sending the Holy Spirit into the world following the setting aside of Israel in order to acquire a bride for His Son (after Christ's return to heaven). And, as in the type, the bride is being taken from among God's Own people (which cannot be from Israel, for the house of Israel lies desolate during this time; or Israel during this time is looked upon as Sarah [Gen. 23] and Lazarus [John 11] - dead). The restoration of Israel will occur, as in the type, after the bride has been acquired for God's Son (Gen. 25:1ff), after two days (John 11:6, 7).

1. A Necessary Interval

Israel, at Christ's first coming, rejected the proffered kingdom of the heavens. The people of Israel, a people in possession of both earthly and heavenly promises and blessings (though they had experientially known only a portion of the earthly) rejected the heavenly. They spurned the offer to occupy positions in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom; and once the house was left desolate, it was necessary for God to call a *new people* into existence to be the recipient of this offer. And this is exactly what has occurred. This is the reason for the existence of the "one new man" *in Christ*, who is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2:14, 15).

The purpose for Christ's departure into heaven, as brought out in the parable of the pounds, is *to receive a kingdom* from His Father (Luke 19:12). A kingdom though, as also brought out in the parable of the pounds, necessitates *rulers* to govern affairs in the realm covered by the kingdom (Luke 19:16-19). And God is presently taking two days, two millenniums, to call out these rulers.

The rulers God is presently calling out will reign as co-regents with Christ, as His bride, His consort queen. And as in the type set forth in Genesis, chapter twenty-four, the bride is being taken *from among His Own people*. God has sent the Holy Spirit to this earth to acquire a bride for His Son *from among Christians, His Own people*.

As in the original type, Eve was removed from Adam's body to reign with him as consort queen (Gen. 1:28; 2:21, 22). Eve was not all of Adam's body, only a small part; and this same relationship between body and bride will exist relative to the bride being called out for the Second Man, the Last Adam. That which is true of the type is also true of the antitype, and conversely; one is an exact replica of the other.

The bride of Christ will be the body of Christ in the same sense that Eve was the body of Adam. Eve was bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh (Gen. 2:23); Eve was the body of Adam, but she was not *all* of the body.

All of the saved during the present dispensation form the body, but *not all* of the saved will form the bride. As in the type of Eve or Rebekah, the bride is removed from the body - from the saved, from among the Lord's own people. This same truth is also taught in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds. Not all of the servants in these parables occupied positions of power and authority when their Master returned, having received the kingdom. Positions of this nature were reserved for the *faithful*. That is to say, not all Christians will occupy positions with Christ when He returns, having received the kingdom. Positions of this nature, as co-heirs with Him, seated on the throne as consort queen, are reserved for the *faithful*.

2. A Necessary Departure

"The kingdom of the world", presently in possession and control of Satan and his angels, will one day *become* "the kingdom of our Lord" (Rev. 11:15, ASV). This kingdom is part of a realm ruled by a far greater Power than the incumbent powers and authorities. It is a province within the kingdom of God, a kingdom covering the entire universe. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Psa. 103:19; 1 Chron. 19:11, 12).

Satan presently holds possession and control of a province "under" God's *overall, absolute* possession and control, though he has disqualified himself; and he will continue to hold his present position until Christ receives the kingdom from His Father, for a principle of Biblical government necessitates that an incumbent ruler hold his position until he is actually replaced.

God has told His Son, "*Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*", awaiting that day when the present powers and authorities are put down and the Son receives possession and control of the kingdom (Psa. 110:1ff). The reception of the kingdom from the Father and the accompanying transfer of power and authority is recorded in Dan. 7:9-14: "*I beheld till...And there was given him dominion, glory, and a kingdom...*"

It is then that Christ and His co-heirs, presently being called out, will *possess* the kingdom and *rule* the earth with a "rod of iron" (Psa. 2:6-9; Rev. 2:26, 27).

Delegated Responsibility

Matthew 25:14-18

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. 6 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

The Master of the house, prior to His departure, entrusted His goods to the servants within His house, leaving them with the command, "Occupy till I come" (this is implied from the Parable of the Pounds).

The Master's servants were to be busily involved in the use of that which had been entrusted to their care during the time of the Householder's absence.

The Householder had previously purchased the servants, paying the price with His Own blood at Calvary (1Cor. 6:19, 20). They were "his own servants." They belonged to Him alone, and they were to serve Him alone (1Cor. 7:23).

The Master of the House, being perfectly just and righteous, is revealed to be a Householder Who deals with His servants accordingly. There is no unfair treatment or any mistreatment of the servants. Everything is carried out within the framework of the Householder's justice and righteousness. He entrusted a portion of His goods and a corresponding responsibility to each servant (with *all* his goods being distributed after a particular fashion among *all* His servants). Not a single servant was overlooked. And within this distribution and responsibility, there was one thing above all else which the Householder expected: *faithfulness to the task at hand* (1Cor. 4:2). Then within the Master's just and righteous dealings, faithfulness would result in reward, but unfaithfulness would result in chastisement.

Any thought that the Householder may overlook certain things - whether in the realm of either faithfulness or unfaithfulness - would be completely out of character with His justice and righteousness. A just distribution among and corresponding expectation concerning His servants occurred prior to the Householder's departure, and an equally just recompense would occur when the Householder returned. If there were to be rewards for faithfulness, there must also be a corresponding chastisement for unfaithfulness, else injustice within the Householder's dealings with His servants would occur.

The Talents – Five, Two, or One

As previously stated, The Parable of the Talents is similar in most respects as the Parable of the Pounds in Luke, chapter nineteen. Both show an overall view of the same sequence of events, though each presents certain things after a slightly different fashion. All of these parables, along with companion parables such as the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22:2-14), must be viewed together in order to see the complete picture. Certain specific truths are emphasized in each, with no one parable being an island unto itself. Specific truths from one parable will be in complete keeping, in every detail, with specific truths from another parable; and as one begins to correlate these truths, the complete subject will as a result begin to open to his understanding.

With these things in mind, along with the thought of ten servants and ten pounds, we can move back into the Old Testament and view a corresponding type after a somewhat similar fashion. In Gen. 24:1ff the story is given concerning Abraham sending His eldest servant into Mesopotamia to procure a bride for his son, Isaac. The servant had in his possession "ten camels" laden with his master's goods. "Ten" shows *ordinal completion* here, as in the parable of the ten virgins or the parable of the pounds; and another facet of how the pounds (the Master's goods) are to be used is shown in the type. Abraham's eldest servant, typifying the Holy Spirit in the world today, is the one who took his master's goods and laid them out before the prospective bride. He, as in the antitype in John 16:14, 15, took the things of Abraham (which belonged to Isaac, for "unto him hath he [Abraham] given all that he hath" [v. 36; 25:5]) and showed them to Rebekah. The Holy Spirit is doing the same thing in the world today. He is taking the things of the Father, which have been given to the Son (the Son has been made "heir of *all things*" [Heb. 1:2; John 16:15]), and is revealing them to Christians.

The Lord's servants, during the time of His absence, are to function in complete dependence upon the

power and work of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's goods are seen in possession of His servants in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, and these same goods are seen in possession of the Holy Spirit in the antitype of Gen. 24:10, 36, 53. These goods are to be used by the Lord's servants under the perfect leadership of the Holy Spirit. This truth can be seen by comparing the parable of the ten virgins with the parable of the talents. The faithful, productive servants in the parable of the talents are synonymous with the five wise virgins possessing the extra supply of Oil in the parable of the ten virgins. That is to say, faithful, productive servants are those wise servants filled with the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to govern and control their affairs. Or, to state the matter after another fashion, faithfulness in allowing the Holy Spirit to manifest Himself in His fullness in one's life will, through a use of the Lord's goods, result in productivity and fruit-bearing.

The wedding garment is comprised of "the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8, ASV) - works emanating out of faithfulness to one's calling, producing an increase through the use of the talents or pounds - and this is the garment with which Christians must clothe themselves when they arrive in the Bridegroom's presence, else they will appear naked (Matt. 22:11-14; Rev. 3:17, 18).

The Master's servants have been called and His goods have been committed to their trust. *All* of the Master's servants participate in this calling, and *all* will one day be called forth to render an account. In that coming day, there will be both faithful and unfaithful servants who will be shown to have been either profitable or unprofitable servants. It will be in that day that a full disclosure will be made among the Lord's servants concerning how each one handled that portion of the Lord's goods committed to his trust.

A Distribution Among Servants

The main difference between the parable of the talents in Matthew and the parable of the pounds in Luke is the manner in which the Lord's goods were distributed to His servants. In Matthew, these goods were referred to as "talents"; and they were distributed *according to a man's ability*, with some servants receiving more than other servants. In the parable of the pounds though, each servant received an identical amount simply because of *his individual identity* - a servant of the Lord. "Ability", as in the parable of the talents, is not in view.

The talents and pounds have to do with monetary units of exchange. These are the Master's goods, spoken of in a monetary sense (gold or silver coins, which could vary in size and worth, would be one form of either). The Lord described His goods and the use of these goods after a fashion which man could readily understand. Though the Lord's goods were not actually talents and pounds [*lit.* minas] per se, the Lord, speaking to His disciples, used the quite familiar method of trading and trafficking within their own monetary system to illustrate how the goods He was leaving behind were to be used.

The parable of the pounds shows each servant possessing equal responsibility and worth in the Lord's sight, though each servant does not exhibit the same degree of faithfulness and zeal during the Lord's absence. Ten pounds are delivered to ten servants, with each servant receiving one pound (v. 13; vs. 16-20); and no distinction is made in the servants *until* they appear before the Lord at the time of His return. Only then does a distinction and/or separation occur on the basis of productivity within the sphere of delegated responsibility.

The parable of the talents shows the same thing, though after a different fashion. Each servant receives a portion of the Lord's goods based on his "ability", with some servants receiving more than other servants; but there is still equal responsibility and worth among the servants in the Lord's sight. This is evident by

the Lord's dealings with His servants at the time of His return. Servants receiving two different amounts preceding the Lord's departure but exhibiting the same degree of faithfulness and zeal during His absence received identical commendations from the Lord when He returned.

One servant received five talents, another servant received two talents, and another servant received one talent (v. 15). The servant in possession of the five talents realized an increase of one hundred percent. He gained five additional talents through an invested use of the initial five which the Lord had entrusted to his care (v. 20). The servant in possession of the two talents did likewise. He also realized an increase of one hundred percent. He gained two additional talents through an invested use of the two talents which the Lord had entrusted to his care (v. 22). They each exhibited the same degree of faithfulness and zeal to the responsibility with which they had been entrusted, and each received the same commendation (vs. 21, 23), which undoubtedly would result in the same reward.

The servant in possession of the one talent, however, hid his lord's money, realizing no increase, for there was no investment. Had this servant exhibited the same degree of faithfulness and zeal as the other two servants, bringing forth an increase of one hundred percent (one additional talent), he too would have heard his Lord say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant..." He would have received the same commendation (and undoubtedly the same reward) as the other two servants. But such was not his lot; and because of unfaithfulness to that with which he had been entrusted, he suffered rebuke and chastisement at the time he was called forth to give an accounting (vs. 24-30).

Rebuke and chastisement for unfaithfulness *must* be just as much a part of the Lord's dealings with his servants as commendation and reward for faithfulness. If such were not the case, perfect justice and righteousness within the Lord's dealings with His servants would not be satisfied.

Different degrees of reward are shown in the parable of the pounds, not in the parable of the talents. Rewards are based on works emanating out of faithfulness; and faithfulness, resulting in works, has to do with that portion of the Lord's goods committed to one's trust. A servant is to exercise faithfulness within the scope of the talent/talents or the pound in his possession. That delivered to another is not his concern but rather the concern of the one to whom it has been delivered, and conversely.

In the parable of the pounds, one servant, through his efforts, brought forth one thousand percent (v. 16); and another servant, at the same time, through his efforts, brought forth five hundred percent (v. 18). Accordingly, they were both commended, but they did not receive identical rewards (vs. 17, 19). Their rewards were commensurate with the return on their investment that resulted from their individual labors.

Then there is again, as in the parable of the talents, the case of the servant failing in his responsibility. And, as also in the parable of the talents, the Lord's perfect justice and righteousness were satisfied through the unfaithful servant receiving an equally just recompense (vs. 20-26). He, as the faithful servants, received exactly what he deserved, nothing more, and nothing less.

The Commission to Servants

Two things are to be avoided during the time of the Lord's absence: 1) *being unoccupied or idle*, and 2) *being busy in the wrong realm*. Prior to His departure, the Lord was very specific concerning the conduct of His servants between the time of His departure and the time of His return. He had distributed His goods to His servants and had left them with the specific command, "Occupy till I come."

The Lord's servants were to be occupied with handling the Lord's goods, His business, throughout the entire time of His absence. The master of the house had left those within His household in charge of matters pertaining to affairs in His house. He had distributed the household business among His servants in the house according to their individual ability to function in particular realms; and He had left each servant with a specific charge to faithfully carry out the particular household responsibility with which he had been entrusted.

1. His Own Servants

The parable of the talents provides the capstone for the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse. If any question still lingers in one's mind concerning the identity of those in the field (24:40), those grinding at the mill (24:41), the servant who either remains faithful or becomes unfaithful (24:45-51), or the wise and foolish virgins (25:1-13), the opening verse of the concluding parable in this section will resolve the matter. The Householder called "his own servants", which leaves no room to question the identity of those in view throughout the entire section.

The words "his own", forming a double possessive in the English text, are a translation of the Greek word *idios*. This word refers specifically to that which belongs to an individual in contrast to that which is not his, belonging to another. This is the word used twice in John 1:11 where Christ "came unto his own [*idia*, neuter pl. ('his own things')], and his own [*idioi*, masculine pl. ('his own people')] received him not." The things to which He came (the throne of David, His Own throne, the domain over which He was to rule, etc.) were His Own things, though not yet in His possession; and those who rejected Him were His Own people - the Jewish people - constituting God's firstborn son, His covenant people, and Christ's brethren according to the flesh.

Things and individuals outside the scope of "his own" are not in view in John 1:11. Jesus specifically stated that He had been sent only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel", and He commissioned His disciples to go only to these same individuals, forbidding them to go "into the way of the Gentiles" (Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:24). The Gentiles were "aliens from the commonwealth [Gk. *politeia*, referring to one's 'citizenship' or 'political sphere of activity'] of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

The same thing is true through the use of the expression, "his own servants", in Matt. 25:14. The specific reference is to those within His household, as those within the now desolated house of Israel in John 1:11. "His own servants" can refer to none other than those who belong to Him, comprising His house during the present dispensation. These individuals are neither Jew nor Gentile but rather comprise the "one new man" in Christ.

Through no type of sound exegesis can "his own servants" be enlarged to include unsaved Jews or Gentiles. The servant thrust into the darkness outside at the conclusion of the parable must be reckoned to possess the same standing relative to being the Lord's Own servant as the servants allowed to enter into the joy of their Lord in an earlier part of the parable.

However, for those who are still not convinced that the third servant, the one given one talent, is indeed saved, I would offer these considerations:

a. Equally with the other servants he is entrusted with our Lord's goods on His ascension; but Christ has never entrusted, and never does entrust, His work on earth to the unsaved: therefore this is a saved servant equally with the rest. About to take a journey, the Nobleman is obliged to hand over this property of his, which he is unable to manage personally as before, to other faithful hands during the time of his absence. He therefore calls, not strange laborers, but his own servants, belonging to him as his servants; and as their master, since he may expect that they will regard his interest as their own, entrusts to them and their hands the property he leaved behind. The servants differ greatly in capacity – in extremes, as five to one; but they do not differ at all in the possession of a common trust.

b. The three servants are judged together, at one spot and at one time; but the wicked dead are not judged until the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:5 & 12) which is 1,000 years after the judgment of the redeemed. So also, the slothful servant is judged last of the three, as last risen and last rapt; for he is a *"servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will"*. As judged together, all three servants are the redeemed, judged in the one and only judgment in which the Church appears (2Cor. 5:10); and as this judgment is in the Parousia, the only access to which is by rapture, all the unsaved are of necessity physically excluded. None can reach the Judgment Seat of Christ except the saved.

c. All three are judged, like the Seven Churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, solely on the ground of their works – their faith in, and love for the absent King are implied and assumed, but their standing is never challenged. Now if the third servant were an unsaved soul, then his works could in no way be accepted, because between the two Advents, it is the redeemed alone who are judged according to their works, as only those who have received from Christ can work for Him. Every servant of God has a personal service for Christ in the world, a sacred trust to fulfill; it is that mission, that trust, which constitutes him a "servant", the title by which the Apostles most loved to describe themselves. The salvation the believer receives is the sole ground on which he can trade at all, and it is the Church alone which is the market where God's trade is forever going on. It is evident that the design is not to describe a man entirely fallen from faith, or an apostate; but one who, although he has not dissolved his connection as a servant, or squandered his talent, yet has not used it to his Lord's advantage – one who has not done his duty.

d. The final proof is overwhelming. In the twin Parable of the Pounds, the unsaved are placed in careful contrast with the saved, as Citizens and as Servants, the only two classes in this world, sharply dividing mankind. The Servants our Lord entrusts with His all on earth; the Citizens send the message after the ascended Christ, *"We will not have this man to reign over us"*. This is a message which will have its full and final fulfillment in the great apostasy of the last days. All three servants have accepted Jesus as Lord, and have entered vitally into the service of God. His own Servants, i.e., those who have become His through faith, are in direct contrast to the Citizens who would not have Him to rule over them, and who are slain without mercy before his face. While the one Servant represents an inactive member of the body of Christ, the Church, who failed to perform his duty, these Citizens are open rebels; and hence the Lord orders them to be killed. It is evident that this penal proceeding is essentially distinguished from the reproof administered to the one Servant.

Our Lord casts the main emphasis on the third servant – seven verses are devoted to the servant who was a failure, and only three each to the successful servants. Therefore, upon this servant's identity depends Christ's main teaching in the parable; and unless we understand that this may be ourselves, ours will be a concealed peril, like a man-trap hidden under forest leaves. *It is obvious that the believer who denies the possible application of the passage to himself (even though he may be committing every offense of which*

the third servant can be guilty), so encases himself in a coat of steel that God's sword falls on him blunted and harmless.

2. His Goods

In Genesis, chapter twenty-four, the mission of Abraham's servant was to obtain a bride for Isaac. The servant had in his possession his master's goods, which belonged to Isaac; and these goods were carried into Mesopotamia with a view to obtaining a bride for Abraham's son, who remained with his father throughout the time of the search.

Abraham's servant, once in Mesopotamia and in the presence of Abraham's own people, made known the purpose for his journey; and once Rebekah had been singled out as the prospective bride, the servant brought forth "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment." He gave these to Rebekah, and he also gave "precious things" to other family members (v. 53).

In the antitype, the Holy Spirit is in the world today to obtain a bride for Christ. He has in His possession all the Father's goods, which belong to the Son; and these goods have been brought into the world with a view to obtaining a bride for the Son, who remains with the Father throughout the time of the search.

The Holy Spirit, as He indwells those comprising the "one new man" *in Christ*, makes known the purpose for His presence in the world today; and once this purpose begins to be realized - once Christians become aware of the true nature of the Holy Spirit's present ministry and begin to manifest an interest in that which is uppermost in the mind of the Father - they find themselves, as Rebekah, coming into possession of choice treasures from the things which belong to the Son. And, in line with the type, even other family members, other Christians, come into possession of "precious things" from the Son's storehouse of treasures.

The distribution of the Master's goods among His servants during the present dispensation must be in accord with 1Cor. 2:9, 10: *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."* God has made known, *through His Word*, the things which He has prepared "for them that love him." And the indwelling Holy Spirit takes this Word, searching "all things, yea, the deep things of God", and reveals these things to Christians.

In the type there was a distribution of the son's goods to both Rebekah and other family members, but this was not an equal distribution. The prospective bride received the largest and best portion.

In both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds there was a distribution among all servants, but in the parable of the talents some servants received *more* than other servants. In keeping with the type and the central issue surrounding the Holy Spirit's mission in the world today, it would have to be recognized that the unequal distribution of the Lord's goods among Christians occurs on the basis of a Christian's interest in and adherence to that which Scripture reveals as the very purpose for the present dispensation.

God has set aside two days, two thousand years, to call out the rulers who are to reign as co-heirs with His Son during the coming age. These co-heirs will constitute the bride of Christ, who will reign as consort queen, seated on the throne with Him. And the Holy Spirit is in the world today procuring the bride. It is

those Christians who manifest an interest in and respond to the Holy Spirit's call as He searches for the bride who find themselves in the position of Rebekah in Gen. 24:53. These are the ones who come into possession of "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment." Other Christians, though they are in possession of what is called "precious things", find themselves in an entirely different category in relation to things reserved peculiarly for the bride.

"Ability", as in the parable of the talents, in the light of the type in Gen. 24:1ff, is not to be thought of in a *natural* sense but in a *spiritual* sense. Some men have great natural "ability", allowing them to achieve numerous things; but "ability" in the parable of the talents is something entirely different. "Ability" in this parable is *capacity* to carry on matters of a spiritual nature through spiritual means in the Lord's house, not matters of a natural nature through natural means either in the house or out in the world; and this ability pertains particularly and peculiarly to matters relating to the purpose for the present dispensation.

Those Christians who understand the true nature of the Holy Spirit's mission in the world today, allowing the Holy Spirit to do a work in their lives within this same framework, would have to be looked upon as the ones possessing the most *capacity* in the realm of "ability"; and within this group there would be varying degrees of "ability", with some Christians being more zealous in their faithful servitude than other Christians. Lesser "ability" within this same framework would correspondingly come about through lesser *capacity* as individuals move away from the realm of allowing the Holy Spirit to do a work in their lives, in keeping with the purpose for the present dispensation.

An interesting thought drawn from Gen. 24:53 concerns the type goods, from those belonging to Isaac, which the servant gave to Rebekah. He delivered into her hands "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment".

The "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold", which would constitute a portion of the Lord's goods used in trading and trafficking in the antitype, are ultimately seen in a similar sense (pointing to a past usage) at issues surrounding the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those Christians using the "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold" to bring forth an increase during the present time will see their works described after the *same* fashion, as "gold, silver, precious stones", at the Judgment Seat. However, those Christians failing in this respect will have nothing to show but works described after an entirely *different* fashion, as "wood, hay, stubble" (1Cor. 3:12-15).

Then the "raiment" would undoubtedly point to the *wedding garment*, for the prospective bride was present, and she was to array herself in a proper fashion before meeting Isaac (Gen. 24:65). The same is true in the antitype. The wedding garment is made up of "righteous acts" (Rev. 19:8), and Christians have been granted the privilege of clothing themselves through the proper use of the Lord's goods in their possession.

Concluding Remarks:

The Lord's command concerning the manner of living in which those of His house are to be engaged during the time of His absence is clear. The Lord has delivered *all* His goods into the hands of *all* His servants and has left them with the command, "Occupy till I come."

Each servant is to be busily engaged, on his Lord's behalf, with that portion of the Lord's goods delivered *to him personally*. He is not to be engaged in another's affairs, nor are others to be engaged in his affairs. He is responsible to the Lord alone to exercise faithfulness *within the scope of His calling*; and he will

one day answer to the Lord alone, at the time of His return, for faithfulness or unfaithfulness in carrying out *delegated responsibility within the house*.

The *nature of rewards for faithfulness* is clearly revealed to be that of occupying one of the numerous proffered positions as co-heir with Christ, seated with Him on the throne, during the coming age (Matt. 24:47; 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17, 19). And the *nature of chastisement for unfaithfulness* is clearly revealed to be not only that of being rejected for one of the numerous proffered positions with Christ but that of punishment as well (Matt. 24:48-51; 25:26-30; Luke 19:22-26).

And to Return

Matthew 25:19

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

Luke 19:15

And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

The emphasis in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds is upon present faithfulness during the time of the Nobleman's absence in view of a future reckoning at the time of the Nobleman's return. These two parables outline the complete scope of the present dispensation (God's dealings with a house separate and distinct from the desolated house of Israel), providing the reason for the present dispensation, the reason for Christ's departure into heaven, and the reason for His return.

The Nobleman (Christ) has gone into heaven "to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke 19:12). The administration of this kingdom, a worldwide kingdom (Isa. 2:2; Dan. 2:35; Luke 1:33), will require numerous qualified rulers; and during the time between Christ's departure to receive the kingdom and His return after having received the kingdom, the "many sons" who will ascend the throne and reign as co-heirs with Him in the kingdom are being called out (Acts 15:14; Heb. 2:9, 10). According to the type in Genesis, chapter twenty-four, this is the central focus of the Holy Spirit's ministry in the world today. The Father has sent the Holy Spirit into the world to procure a bride destined to reign as consort queen with the Son; and that which is central in the Holy Spirit's ministry would have to be looked upon as also central in the ministry of the Lord's servants as they manage affairs in His house during the present dispensation.

Salvation is for a *purpose*, and that purpose has to do with the *coming kingdom*. We have been called "unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12). Salvation is not so much *saved from* ("hell") as it is *saved unto* ("his kingdom and glory"). And to deal with the salvation issue outside of this framework, as so many do, is not in keeping with the Biblical picture at all.

Any approach to evangelism as an end in itself, or any approach to discipleship which seeks to affect maturity apart from knowledge of the reason Christ has gone into heaven, the reason for the present dispensation, and the reason for Christ's return, *cannot* be considered as a Biblically oriented approach to be taken by the Lord's household servants. A proper evangelistic approach will view eternal salvation as a beginning point, not an end. Once an individual has been evangelized (saved), he finds himself beginning an entirely new life. He, as a newborn Christian, is then to be placed under the ministry of a pastor-

teacher, where discipleship comes into view. The pastor-teacher is to be instrumental in leading the person from immaturity to maturity within a framework surrounding the reason for his salvation. As there is *purpose in salvation*, there is also *purpose in maturity*, with the same ultimate goal in view.

The current Laodicean state of Christendom, along with the widespread immaturity of Christians and confusion in Christian circles, can all be traced directly to an incorrect approach to evangelism and/or discipleship. Somewhere along the way there has been a breakdown in the process, resulting in untrained or improperly trained household servants and a subsequent non-understanding or misunderstanding of household affairs. Mismanagement within the household by the Lord's servants then follows, with tragic consequences. Man fell from a created position in Genesis, and the purpose for man's salvation must be related to the purpose for his creation: "...let them have *dominion*..." (Gen. 1:26-28). Redeemed man possessing *dominion over the earth*, in line with God's original purpose for his creation, must be viewed as the *ultimate goal of salvation*.

Three Appearings of Christ in Connection with Salvation

Within the framework of that which is revealed in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, the writer of Hebrews refers to three appearings of Christ in connection with salvation. One appearing is *past*, one is *present*, and one is *future*. These three appearings have been recorded together within the same context near the end of the ninth chapter and, in keeping with the previously announced work of the Son pertaining to bringing "many sons unto glory" (2:10), provide the proper interrelationship between the Lord's work as *Prophet (past)*, *Priest (present)*, and *King (future)*. (Keys of Three).

1. Past Appearing

Hebrews 9:26b

..but now once in the end of the world ['ages'] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Unredeemed man is dead in trespasses and sins. He is alienated from God. Redeemed man, though, has been made alive, and a right relationship with God has been restored (Eph. 2:1-7; Col. 2:13-15). This has been accomplished solely through the finished work of the Redeemer (promised in Gen. 3:15 immediately following man's fall.)

At the time Adam fell, "death passed upon all men." This included Adam and all his descendants, even though his descendants had neither been born nor would sin "after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Rom. 5:12-14). Consequently, *all* have sinned; and the penalty for sin, established in Eden, is *death* (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 3:23; 5:12; 6:23).

In order to bring man back into a right relationship with God, the Redeemer must pay sin's penalty. The Redeemer must die on man's behalf. This is the reason God sent His Son "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself", bearing "the sins of many" (Heb. 9:26-28).

"Christ died for our sins...was buried, and...rose again the third day..." (1Cor. 15:3). As in the words of the song, "Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe..." His finished work of redemption leaves nothing for man to do simply because there is nothing which man can do.

Aside from being spiritually dead and alienated from God, unredeemed man is presented in Scripture as a

ruined creation; and the pattern concerning how God restores a ruined creation has forever been set forth in the opening verses of Genesis: "...the Spirit of God moved...And God said..." (Gen. 1:2, 3). *All work*, resulting in the restored material creation, was accomplished through Divine intervention. And it is the same concerning ruined man today. *All the work* has already been accomplished by man's Redeemer. Man, relative to this work, must be completely passive. He can do no more than simply receive that which Christ has accomplished on his behalf (Acts 16:30, 31).

As has previously been shown, *Christ's appearance to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself* and *man's coming rule over the earth* are so intimately related that one cannot be separated from the other. Man was created to have dominion; but he fell, bringing about his disqualification. And redemption is with a view to allowing redeemed man to ultimately occupy the position from which he fell. Such an outlook on the intimate relationship between the reason surrounding man's creation and the reason surrounding his redemption is the focal point of Scripture, beginning with the opening verses of Genesis.

a) *Restoration of the Material Creation*: The material creation was restored, not for the incumbent ruler and those occupying positions with him (Satan and his angels), but for an entirely new creation about to be brought into existence. A ruin of the material creation had previously occurred because of Satan's aspirations for power beyond that which God had given to him (Isa. 14:13, 14). He sought to move into the very position which God Himself held. Rather than ruling one province in God's kingdom (the earth), he sought to move into the position of ruler over the entire kingdom (all provinces in the entire universe). As a result, his kingdom was wrecked, and he himself was disqualified as the earth's ruler, though he would continue to hold the scepter until God removed him from his position and gave the kingdom to another. A restoration of the ruined creation then subsequently occurred, with a view to a change in the government.

We see a parallel type of this in the comparison with King Saul and King David. Saul was anointed to be king by God (through Samuel). But through disobedience, he was rejected from being king (1Sam. 15:26). Samuel then, according to God's instructions, anointed David as king. Yet Saul remained in power as king until such time that God removed him at his death. In the meantime, God had two anointed rulers in the earth – one was on the throne, and one was waiting for God to remove the first before he could ascend to the throne.

The type, antitype is seen in Satan and Christ. Satan is God's anointed ruler over the earth even though he has been disqualified through disobedience. Satan is the god of this world:

2 Corinthians 4:4

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Luke 4:6

And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

Jesus was anointed King of this world when He was resurrected and ascended and presented His Blood on the mercy seat in the temple in heaven. He is now a King-Priest after the order of Melchisedec, seated at the right hand of the Father until His enemies are made His footstool.

Luke 19:12

He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

This certain nobleman – Jesus - has not yet returned.

Matthew 28:18

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Psalms 110:1

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Thus there are two anointed Kings over the earth at the present; but Jesus will not take His throne on earth until Satan has been removed. But Jesus will assume His rightful throne over the earth when He returns

Matthew 25:31

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

b) *The Creation of Man:* Immediately following the restoration of the material creation (Gen. 1:2b-25), God created man in His Own "image" and "likeness" (a type of creation unknown in the angelic world); and man was created for a stated purpose, in line with the immediately preceding restoration of the ruined domain. At the time of man's creation, God said, "...let them have dominion..." (Gen. 1:26-28). This was the dominion possessed by Satan and his angels, which was to ultimately pass into the hands of man. The material creation had been restored, and man was brought into existence to take the scepter (in the stead of Satan and his angels) and rule over the restored domain.

c) *The Fall of Man:* Satan, knowing why man had been created, immediately began a work to bring about man's disqualification. Satan approached Eve and deceived her through the same means which had previously brought about his own fall: "...ye shall be as gods ['like God']..." (Gen. 3:5). Satan had previously sought to be "like the most High [like God]", resulting in his fall and a wrecked kingdom; and God's new creation, subsequently being deceived to move in the same direction (though only Eve was deceived [I Tim. 2:14]), experienced the same consequences. Man found himself disqualified to fulfill the very purpose for his existence, and the restored earth over which man was to rule fell under a curse. (One must understand that man did not assume the scepter immediately following his creation. In fact, man has never held the scepter. Satan has held the scepter, without interruption, from the time of his appointment [preceding Adam's creation] until the present time. This can be shown quite easily by noting the principle of Biblical government which necessitates an incumbent ruler holding the scepter until he is physically replaced.

Had man taken the scepter, he would not have relinquished it at the time he partook of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Such didn't occur when Satan sinned, and it wouldn't have occurred when man sinned either. Had man held the scepter at the time of his fall, he, as Satan had previously done, would have had to continue holding the scepter until God brought forth a third provincial ruler. Then again, had man held the scepter at this time, it could not have been reclaimed by Satan [who holds it today], for Satan was a disqualified ruler. He would have had no more claim on the scepter than man.)

d) *The Redemption of Man*: Immediately following the fall, God promised man a Redeemer (Gen. 3:15); and because God does not change His mind concerning His "gifts and calling" (Rom. 11:29), the purpose for man's redemption would have to be in keeping with the purpose for his creation. Man was to be redeemed with a view to his possessing dominion over the earth (which can only be dominion over a future earth, for the earth following man's fall lay [and continues today] under "*the bondage of corruption*" [Rom. 8:21]).

e) *God's Firstborn Son in Egypt*: Two and one-half millennia later we see God culminating a work and moving in the direction of placing man in the position for which he had been created. God called His son, the nation of Israel (Exo. 4:22, 23), out of Egypt under Moses to exercise the rights of primogeniture in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These rights, among other things, had to do with the people of Israel ruling over all the Gentile nations of the earth.

Before God removed His people from Egypt though, redemption had to first occur, as shown by the death of the paschal lambs. The firstborn throughout the land of Egypt came under the sentence of death - sin's wages - and no move could be made toward the land of Canaan until these wages had been paid.

To satisfy sin's wages but yet remove the firstborn from Egypt alive, God made provision for a substitutionary death. God decreed that a lamb from the flock could die in the stead of the firstborn in a family. The lamb was to be slain and the blood applied to the doorposts and lintel of the house in which the firstborn lived. Then, when the Lord passed through the land of Egypt at midnight, executing the decreed death of the firstborn, He would pass over the house where the blood had been applied. The applied blood would show that the firstborn within the house had already died. He had died via a recognized vicarious means; and consequently death could no longer have any claim on him (Exo. 11:4-7; 12:1ff).

Redemption, as shown by the death of the paschal lambs in Egypt, was for a purpose; and that purpose was to be brought to pass by the Israelites being removed from Egypt and realizing the rights of the firstborn in the land of Canaan.

f) *God's Firstborn Son Sent into the World*: A millennium and one-half beyond the Exodus from Egypt under Moses, God fulfilled His promise concerning a coming Redeemer. "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son...*To redeem...that we might receive the adoption of sons*" (Gal. 4:4, 5). Jesus was God's Firstborn Son, the One in line to exercise the rights of primogeniture as the Second Man, the Last Adam; and He came into the world to *redeem* man, with the *adoption* in view. Gal. 4:4, 5 clearly reveals that the purpose for redemption has to do with the birthright, associated with the inheritance in Gal. 3:29 (Gal. 4:7). God has redeemed man in order to ultimately bring him into a position where he can (as co-heir with Christ, God's Firstborn) also realize the rights belonging to firstborn sons.

(Note that Gal. 3:26-4:7 is a section dealing with our *positional standing in Christ*, not what we are personally and actually here and now [for example, "in Christ" all distinctions of the human race have been blotted out (3:28), but personally and actually these conditions presently exist]. It is the same with adoption into sonship. Within our positional standing "in Christ", this is looked upon in Gal. 3:26-4:7 as having already occurred, with Christians seated "together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" [Eph. 2:6]; but actually, as in Rom. 8:15-23, the adoption [or occupying positions in heavenly places] is yet future.)

Over seven hundred years before Christ's birth, Isaiah had prophesied concerning the status of earth's

future government under God's promised Redeemer: "...the government shall be upon his shoulder...Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever" (Isa. 9:6, 7). This promise was then reiterated to Mary by the angel Gabriel shortly before the Redeemer's birth (Luke 1:31-33).

Following Christ's birth the wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, the capital of Jewry, seeking the One Who had been "born *King* of the Jews." Herod the king was troubled, along with all Jerusalem; and Herod later had numerous Jewish children slain in and around Bethlehem in a vain attempt to destroy the newborn King (Matt. 2:1-18).

When Christ began His public ministry at the age of thirty, the message to Israel concerned a *kingdom*; but Israel rejected the message and the Messenger. At the end of His earthly ministry, Christ, because of Israel's rejection, was arrayed as a mock King; and the people of Israel then climaxed their rejection by claiming allegiance to Caesar and calling for Christ's crucifixion. Jesus was then crucified, with an inscription placed above His head which read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (Matt. 4:17; 1:33-39; John 19:1-19).

Following His resurrection, Christ spent forty days with His disciples, teaching them things pertaining to "the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3); and He then departed into heaven "*to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.*"

g) *God's Firstborn Son Presently Being Called Forth*: Israel is still God's firstborn, though lying desolate; and this nation will one day be redeemed to realize the *regal* status held by firstborn sons. However, while the house of Israel lies desolate, God is dealing with a separate and distinct house, destined to be adopted into sonship. An adoption into this position, placing Christians in a comparable position to that held by Israel (in relation to sonship), is, as previously shown, also for *regal* purposes. Only *firstborn sons* can rule, and the purpose for man's redemption necessitates the adoption. Christians are presently "children" awaiting the adoption into "sonship" (Rom. 8:17-23); and once adopted, the Church will be looked upon as God's firstborn son, as Israel is presently God's firstborn son (Heb. 12:23).

Realizing the rights of primogeniture in such a position can ultimately be held only by those who have appropriated the blood of the Passover Lamb. As in Egypt, the firstborn via natural birth comes under the sentence of death (which, in the antitype, would include everyone in the human race; the first birth has been rejected by God, necessitating a second birth, a birth from above, a supernatural birth [John 3:3]). And as in Egypt, a Substitute has been provided; and, as also in Egypt, salvation is for a purpose which has *regal* implications. Salvation is for a purpose associated with the birthright, and redeemed individuals will be adopted into sonship in order to exercise the rights belonging to *firstborn sons*.

The simple, clear picture presented by the whole of Scripture concerns man being brought back into the position for which he was created, *which first necessitates redemption*. Christ appeared "*once...to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*", with a view to two subsequent appearances.

2. Present Appearing

Hebrews 9:24

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

During the period between the time of His departure to receive the kingdom and the time of His return in possession of the kingdom, Christ is not only seated at the right hand of the Father, but He is also exercising a high priestly ministry in the Holy of Holies of the heavenly sanctuary. He is seated at the right hand of the Father, awaiting that day when His enemies will be made His footstool, anticipating receiving the kingdom from the Father; and He is exercising the office of High Priest in order to affect a present cleansing for those comprising the "one new man" *in Christ*, anticipating one day bringing forth a "glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing..." (Eph. 5:26, 27; Heb. 1:13; 1John 1:6-9).

Christ presently ministers in the Holy of Holies on the basis of His shed blood. This blood was shed at Calvary to provide redemption for fallen man, and this same blood is presently on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies of the heavenly sanctuary to provide a present cleansing for the redeemed. Saved man, still possessing the old sin nature and residing in a body of death, is ever subject to defilement as he ministers on earth during his pilgrim walk, necessitating cleansing.

God provided a means of cleansing for His people during Old Testament days, and He has done the same today. The Old Testament priests were provided with a brazen laver, containing upper and lower basins filled with water, to wash their hands and feet as they ministered on behalf of the people between the brazen altar and the Holy Place; and blood sacrifices were offered by the priests daily and by the high priest on the day of atonement to provide a cleansing for those who had appropriated the blood of the paschal lambs (Heb. 7:27; 9:6, 7, 22).

New Testament priests, though, have been provided with a past Sacrifice, with no additional sacrifices ever again necessary. It is "a new and living way", being "washed with pure water", to affect cleansing for those who have appropriated the blood of the Passover Lamb (Heb. 7:27; 10:12-22).

Christ's past ministry as *Prophet* makes possible His present ministry as *Priest*, and both ministries look out ahead to the same thing - Christ's future ministry as *King*. One day Christ will terminate His present ministry and come forth from the Holy of Holies, first to reckon with those whom He has redeemed and for whom He presently ministers, and then to reign over the earth with the "many sons" whom He will have brought unto glory.

3. Future Appearing

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

The three appearings of Christ are correspondingly connected with the three aspects of salvation: *We have been saved* (past [Eph. 2:8, 9]), *we are being saved* (present [1Cor. 1:18]), and *we are about to be saved* (future [Heb. 1:14]). Once an individual has been saved (past, through the finished work of Christ at Calvary), that individual is then dealt with on an entirely different plane. He is then dealt with concerning a present salvation (on the basis of Christ's past work at Calvary, but connected with His present work in the heavenly sanctuary); and this is with a view to a future salvation (at the time of Christ's return).

The past aspect of salvation has to do with man's *spirit*. Man is a tripartite being comprised of body, soul, and spirit; and each of these three parts of man, within God's economy, is subject to salvation at different times. When man sinned in Eden, he died, just as God had decreed (Gen. 2:17). Since his body continued

to live, and his soul - the life-giving principle in the blood (Lev. 17:11) - also continued to live, it is evident that man experienced a *spiritual death*. Unredeemed man today, possessing an unredeemed body housing an unredeemed soul, is *spiritually dead*. The birth from above, correspondingly, is a *spiritual birth*, effecting the change "from death unto life." "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again ['born from above']*" (John 3:6, 7; 5:24).

The salvation of the soul, unlike the salvation of the spirit, is both present and future. And only those who have been born from above, realizing the salvation of their spirits, can enter into the things associated with the salvation of the soul. An individual must first pass "from death unto life." Then, and only then, does the salvation of the *soul* come into view.

The present aspect of salvation, having to do with the *soul*, will be brought to completion at the time Christ returns and effects the redemption of man's body. The saving of the soul has to do with the *life* which one lives after he has passed "from death unto life." This is the salvation referred to in connection with Christ's return in Heb. 9:28, to be realized by those who "look for him [faithful servants in the house awaiting the Householder's return]."

Hebrews is a book dealing with the *salvation of the soul*; and Christ, Who was "once offered to bear the sins of many [effecting the salvation of the *spirit*]" is going to appear the "second time without sin unto salvation [to affect the salvation of the *soul*]."

To deal with Christ's first coming apart from His second coming is utter folly. To have the message of an evangelist (concerning Christ's past work) apart from the subsequent message of a pastor-teacher (concerning Christ's present and future work) can only lead to spiritual disaster in the Christian life. Christ appeared once "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself", He now appears "in the presence of God for us", and one day He will "appear the second time without sin unto salvation." These three appearances comprise an *indivisible unit intimately related to man ultimately being brought back into the position for which he was created*.

Three Appearings of Christ in Connection with Peace

Paul begins each of his thirteen epistles with the words, "Grace to you and peace...", adding the word "mercy" in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus (*ref.* also 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3; Jude 2; Rev. 1:4). "Grace" always appears *first*, for apart from God's "grace" there can be no "peace." In this respect, "faith" as the means through which man is saved can no more stand alone than "peace" can stand alone: "For by *grace* are ye saved through *faith*..." (Eph. 2:8).

The three appearances of Christ in connection with *peace* parallel the three appearances of Christ in connection with *salvation*. There are two aspects of a present peace, in connection with Christ's past and present appearances; and there is a future peace, in connection with Christ's future appearing. (Keys of Three.)

1. Peace with God (Rom. 5:1)

God has established peace "through the blood of his [Christ's] cross" (Col. 1:20), allowing fallen man to have "peace with God" through justification "by faith" (Rom. 5:1). Apart from *justification*, peace between God and man cannot exist (Isa. 48:22; 57:21).

Saved man possesses a positional standing before God which is based entirely upon the finished work of Christ; and within this positional standing, for redeemed man possessing God's imputed righteousness, there is perfect peace.

2. *Peace of God (Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15)*

The *peace of God* can exist only after *peace with God* has been established. The *peace of God* has to do with fellowship between God and those who have *peace with Him* through the blood of the Cross. And Christ is presently ministering in the Holy of Holies, on the basis of His blood on the mercy seat, to allow redeemed man to conduct his pilgrim walk within the framework of this peace (1 John 1:3-2:2).

Whether or not redeemed man possesses the *peace of God* can have no affect on his *peace with God*. Apart from the *peace of God* though, one's servitude will be affected, producing dire present results and future consequences.

3. *Universal Peace (Isa. 9:6-7)*

Christ's first appearance was to affect "peace with God" through *redemption*, not to bring about universal peace (Matt. 10:34; Luke 12:51). Universal peace awaits His reappearance on earth. Peace on earth today exists only among those "in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14, ASV), which would first necessitate redemption, for peace cannot exist between God and the unredeemed.

The Middle East is the *center of unrest* today, particularly Jerusalem. However, the day is coming when the Middle East will be the *center of peace*, particularly Jerusalem. "Jerusalem" means *city of peace*; and when the "Prince of peace" returns (Isa. 9:6), He will "speak peace unto the heathen [nations]" from this city as He holds the scepter and rules from David's throne (Zech. 9:10; Isa. 9:7). Only then will the *peace* which presently eludes the nations of the earth exist (Psa. 122:6).

Thou Good and Faithful Servant

Matthew 25:20-23

And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Luke 19:16-19

Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

Within the framework of the three appearances of Christ in Heb. 9:24-28, it must be recognized that no single appearance stands alone, isolated from the other two. His past appearance, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (v. 26), allows Christ to presently "appear in the presence of God for us [appearing as High Priest for a redeemed people, ministering on the basis of His blood on the mercy seat for those in need of cleansing because of defilement through contact with the world in which they presently reside]" (v. 24); and Christ's past and present appearances allow for a future appearance "without sin unto salvation [a 'salvation ready to be revealed in the last time' - 'the salvation of your souls' (1 Peter 1:5, 9)]" (v. 28; Heb. 10:37-39).

Salvation is for a *purpose*. Christ appeared the first time, providing redemption, to make that purpose possible. He is now appearing in the presence of God, as High Priest in the Holy of Holies of the heavenly sanctuary, to provide a present cleansing for those whom He has redeemed, with that purpose in view. And He will one day return, reappear, "without sin unto salvation", to bring that purpose to pass.

God's purpose for redeeming man is the same as His purpose for creating man. Man was created to possess dominion over the earth; and fallen man, in no position to exercise this dominion, has been redeemed with a view to fulfilling this purpose: "...let them have dominion..." (Gen. 1:26, 28).

The "same Jesus" Who departed into heaven forty days following His resurrection is going to one day return *in the same manner* that He went away (Acts 1:11; John 14:3). Christ has gone away "to receive for himself a kingdom", and He will return to take the reins of government *after* He receives the kingdom (Luke 19:12, 15). At that time He will reckon with those whom He has redeemed and for whom He presently ministers. And this reckoning will be with a view to placing those within His house in various positions of power, occupying the throne as co-heirs with Him in the kingdom. It is then that man will possess the dominion of which God spoke in Gen. 1:26-28.

To Reckon with Them

The first order of business after Christ returns for His household servants will be to reckon with these servants. The Householder's servants will be removed from the earth to appear in His presence at what Scripture calls "the Judgment Seat of Christ" (2Cor. 5:10). And it is here that "every man's work shall be made manifest." Works, activities performed by those in the house during the time of the Householder's absence, will be tried "by fire" to determine the *quality*. Works which endure the fire and remain, likened to "gold, silver, precious stones", will result in a *reward*; works consumed by the fire though, likened to "wood, hay, stubble", will result in *loss* (1Cor. 3:11-15).

1. Judgment for Those Having Already Been Judged

Christians have been justified, declared righteous, on the basis of Christ's past, finished work (Rom. 5:15-19). It is not possible for a Christian to ever appear in judgment where matters pertain to the salvation which he presently possesses. Judgment has already occurred. God judged sin - that which separates man from God - in the person of His Son, and God is satisfied.

The impossibility of a Christian ever coming into judgment pertains strictly to His eternal salvation. One's eternal destiny, at the moment he places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes a settled, closed matter; and for a Christian to ever be brought into judgment where the issue at hand pertains to his eternal

destiny would be to bring into judgment once again that which God has already judged - the finished work of His Son.

Actually there is no such thing as a future judgment - for either the saved or the unsaved - where the issue will involve eternal salvation or eternal damnation. This will not be an issue, it cannot be, at the Judgment Seat of Christ where Christians appear; nor will it be an issue, it cannot be, when the unsaved appear at the judgment of the nations preceding the millennium or at the great white throne judgment following the millennium. In all three instances, judgment with respect to the eternal destiny of those being judged will have *already occurred*, with the issue *already settled*.

John 3:18 makes this very clear:

John 3:18

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

For the believer, judgment is *past*. Sin has been judged in the person of God's Son; and sin's penalty, which is death, has been paid. For the unbeliever, judgment is likewise *past* ("condemned ['judged']" is the translation of a word [*krino*] appearing in the perfect tense in the Greek text, showing a judgment completed in past time with the results presently existing in a finished state). The unbeliever has already been condemned; he has already been judged and is presently occupying this state. Insofar as one's eternal destiny is concerned, no judgment awaits the believer, and judgment has already fallen upon the unbeliever.

2. To Be Judged According to Works

One should note very carefully that it is "works" which come under review at all future judgments in Scripture, whether of the saved or the unsaved (1Cor. 3:13-15; Rev. 20:12, 13; Ezek. 20:34-38; 44:10-16; Matt. 25:34-36, 41-43; Rev. 20:4). And since man's works can have nothing to do with eternal salvation, something other than issues surrounding one's eternal destiny would have to be in view. Judgment relating to eternal salvation or eternal damnation must be a past matter in every future judgment, with individuals appearing at a particular judgment (of either the saved or the unsaved, never a combination of the two), wholly on the basis of that which has *already been determined*. Those for whom "there is therefore now no condemnation ['a rendering of judgment against']" will appear at one judgment, and those who have been "condemned ['judged'] already" will appear at another judgment, entirely separate from that of the redeemed.

According to the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, Christians will appear before Christ in judgment to ascertain *how much each person has gained through trading and trafficking in the Lord's business during His time of absence* (Luke 19:15). There is nothing whatsoever about judgment relating to one's eternal salvation or eternal damnation in these parables. Such would be impossibility. These are parables showing the household servants, those in possession of eternal salvation (those who cannot be called into judgment relative to this matter), being called to an accounting by the Householder at the time of His return.

The Householder will gather "his own servants" before His Judgment Seat - the Judgment Seat of Christ - to reckon with them on the basis of their faithfulness or unfaithfulness in carrying out assigned duties in the house during the time of His absence (*works* emanate out of "faithfulness", and it is *works* which will

come under review). Works also includes fruit which, through obedience to the Holy Spirit, God was able to produce in the Christian. Faithfulness, producing works comparable to "gold, silver, precious stones", will result in commendation and reward; and unfaithfulness, producing works comparable to "wood, hay, stubble", will result in rebuke and loss. That which will be in view, as an end result of this reckoning, has to do with the household servants either being accorded or being denied *positions of power and authority as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom*.

Insofar as the unsaved appearing at either the judgment of the nations in Matt. 25:41-45 or before the great white throne in Rev. 20:11-15 is concerned, judicial issues relating to eternal salvation or eternal damnation likewise cannot come into view. Individuals not in possession of eternal life (those upon whom the wrath of God abides, who have already been judged relative to their unbelief) will be judged on the basis of their own works, with their *eternal destiny already a settled matter*.

Have Thou Authority

Faithfulness in exercising one's household responsibilities during the time of the Householder's absence will result in the household servant being accorded responsibility with his Lord in the kingdom. Unfaithfulness, though, will result in the household servant being denied such responsibility. The principle connecting *faithfulness in present responsibility* with *being accorded future responsibility* was set forth by Christ in the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16:1-13.

Luke 16:10-11

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.¹¹ If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

The unjust steward, placed in charge of his Master's goods, had failed to faithfully discharge his duties concerning the use of these goods. The steward had not acted in a manner which would be to his Master's advantage, and, through mismanagement, he had wasted his Master's goods (v. 1).

The day arrived when the steward was called to render an account concerning his stewardship. The Householder had heard about the steward's unfaithfulness; and upon investigation, with the steward in His presence, the Householder found it necessary to remove him from the position which he held (v. 2).

The steward, relieved of his duties, then no longer held a position of responsibility in the house. The Householder's goods were no longer at his disposal, for that which had previously been committed to his trust had been taken from him. Unfaithfulness in the discharge of his duties had resulted in his being relieved of all responsibility, leaving him with *nothing*. And, though it is not so stated in this parable, this responsibility was undoubtedly then given to another steward (as in the Parable of the Pounds - Luke 19:24).

This, of course, would be the Lord's Own commentary on the unfaithful servant in the parable of the pounds or the parable of the talents. The servant in each parable had been placed in charge of a portion of his Master's goods, but he exhibited unfaithfulness in the responsibility committed to his trust. Then at the time of reckoning, *in his Master's presence*, that with which he had previously been entrusted, belonging to his Master, was taken from him and given to another, leaving him with *nothing*. Revealed unfaithfulness in delegated responsibility in the house correspondingly resulted in a denial of responsibility in the kingdom.

In the parable of the pounds and the parable of the talents, the inverse of that which the unfaithful servant experienced was shown to be true by that which the faithful servants experienced. They had been faithful in delegated responsibility in the house; and, as a result, they were accorded responsibility with their Lord in the kingdom which He had gone away to procure. And, in like fashion, the inverse of that which the Lord said about unfaithfulness in Luke 16:11 would also be true. The Lord would commit to their trust "the true riches." They had been *faithful in lesser responsibility*, and they could be trusted, in like manner, to be *faithful in greater responsibility* (v. 10).

1. The Nature of Rewards

Being rewarded or suffering loss when Christ returns will have to do with the *kingdom* which He has gone away to receive. Faithfulness in one's delegated responsibility as a servant in the house *now* will result in the servant being elevated into the position of ruler during *that coming day* and being accorded responsibility as a co-heir with Christ in the kingdom. However, unfaithfulness in one's delegated responsibility as a servant in the house *now* will result in the servant being placed in a position during *that coming day* where he will no longer even come in contact with his Master's goods. That with which he had been entrusted as a servant in the house will be taken from him, leaving him completely estranged from his Master's goods; and for such an individual, because of irresponsibility, there will be no elevation into the position of ruler, being accorded responsibility as a co-heir with Christ in the kingdom.

Christ's words, reserved for faithful servants, are very clear: "*thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things*" (Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17, 19). And the inverse of this is shown to be true relative to Christ's dealings with unfaithful servants (vs. 24-30; Luke 19:20-24). The same principle which had previously been set forth in the parable of the unjust steward is then reiterated in both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds: "*For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath*" (Matt. 25:29; Luke 19:26).

The key to the matter is *faithfulness to delegated responsibility*. Christ will elevate household servants into positions of rulership, allowing them to ascend the throne and occupy various appointed positions of power and authority as co-heirs with Him, *strictly on the basis of their prior faithfulness*. Nothing could be clearer than the Householder's Own words: "*thou hast been faithful...I will make thee ruler.*"

2. The Goal of Rewards

After whatever fashion one views the Christian life during the present dispensation, the *goal* of all activity is *always the same*. Responsibility has been accorded household servants during the present time with a view to their being elevated and assuming responsible positions in the kingdom yet future. Training and testing occur today, with the outcome realized in the kingdom which follows.

This was graphically illustrated by the Apostle Paul through his viewing the Christian life as a *race*, with the runner striving to acquire one or more *crowns*. Being elevated into the position of ruler and assuming a place as co-heir with Christ on His throne will require a crown. Scripture connects the *crown* and the *throne* after such a fashion that one cannot be separated from the other. Rulers do not govern apart from a throne, and uncrowned individuals do not sit on a throne. Being invested with a crown portends an ascent to the throne, and being denied a crown or one's crown being taken portends either a denial of or a

removal from the throne (Psa. 89:39, 44; Zech. 6:11, 13; Rev. 2:10, 26, 27; 3:21; 6:2; 12:3; 13:1, 2; 19:12, 16).

Five crowns which are possible for Christians to win are mentioned in the New Testament. There is "the incorruptible crown" (1Cor. 9:24-27), "the crown of rejoicing" (1 Thess. 2:19, 20), "the crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:7, 8), "the crown of life" (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10), and "the crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:2-4).

These crowns, portending positions of power and authority with the "King of kings, and Lord of lords" during the coming age, are being held out before Christians during the present time. These are the proffered rewards to be won in the present *race of the faith* as one exhibits faithfulness to the responsibility which has been delegated to him. And these crowns, to be given strictly on the basis of faithfulness to present responsibility, will be worn by those Christians accorded responsible positions of power and authority in the kingdom.

3. The time of Rewards

Christ is presently occupying the office of High Priest, not that of Judge. A judicial role falls *only within* the scope of His kingly office, not His priestly office (to be a "King" is to be a *Judge*; and, although Christ is a King today [He was "born King" (Matt. 2:2)], He is *not* presently exercising that office or any facet of that office). Christ will occupy the office and exercise the duties of King *only after* he concludes His present high priestly ministry. At that time, He will depart the Holy of Holies of the heavenly sanctuary and come forth as the great King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek. *Only then* will He assume a judicial role.

Enter Thou into the Joy of Thy Lord

Hebrews 12:1-2

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Christians have been instructed to do two things in order to prepare themselves for running the present race of the faith. Proper preparation will result in a well-equipped runner who can be victorious and win the crown/crowns in view. Failure in the realm of preparation though will result in an ill-equipped runner who will be unable to successfully complete the race.

Along with preparation, the race is to be run after a particular fashion; and beyond the race, for the successful runner, is entrance into *the joy of the Lord*. This "joy" was set before Christ at Calvary, and it has been set before Christians presently engaged in the race of the faith.

1. Let Us Lay Aside Every Weight

"Weight ['encumbrance' as it appears in most English versions]" is the translation of a Greek word (*ogkos*) which has to do with "bulk" or "mass." A race is in view; and the thought, drawn from the oft-compared Greek games of that day, appears to be twofold: *a) the body itself* (excess fat, weight, etc.), and *b) things*

coming in contact with the body (clothing, jewelry, etc.). A properly prepared runner would have a well-conditioned body (brought into such a state through a long period of training), and he would run the race with a bare minimum of clothing or anything else on his body.

The thought brought over into Christendom concerns laying aside every encumbrance which could impede our progress in the race of the faith. Just as there is proper training and a proper diet to rid the physical man of certain encumbrances, so it is with the spiritual man. Proper growth and development will result in a spiritually attuned man who will know that no Christian holding onto things contrary to the spiritual nature - things of the man of flesh, things of this present world system - can successfully compete in the race. (Note how Scripture lists fleshly encumbrances which *war against the soul*: "the affairs of this life", "the care of this world ['age']", the "pleasures of this life", "the deceitfulness of riches" [Matt. 13:22; Luke 8:14; I Tim. 6:10; 2 Tim. 2:4].)

An ill-prepared runner could not win a crown in the Greek games, and such a runner cannot win a crown in the present race. Seeking to serve both "God and mammon", which is *double-mindedness* (living two lives), will always result in failure (Luke 16:13; 1Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 2:5; James 1:8).

The importance of properly running and victoriously completing this race cannot be overemphasized. The race of the faith is to be run *once*, never to be repeated; and the manner in which each Christian runs this race will determine that Christian's position in the kingdom which follows.

2. And the Sin Which Doth So Easily Beset Us

The sin which "doth so easily beset ['doth so easily ensnare']" Christians, contextually, is *lack of faith*. Over and over in chapter eleven the expression, "By faith", appears. Each individual in this chapter was moved to follow a certain course of action as a direct result of "faith." Works emanating out of faithfulness to one's calling bring faith to its proper goal - the saving of the soul (1 Peter 1:9) and thus hearing the Lord say at the Judgment Seat, "Well done...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21, 23).

Chapter eleven forms the capstone to the Book of Hebrews. Revelation leading into this section of the book centers around the present and future aspects of salvation - an *inherited salvation*, to be realized in *the age to come* by *the many sons* Christ will bring unto glory (1:14; 2:5, 10). And this salvation is specifically called "the saving of the soul" in the verses immediately preceding chapter eleven (10:35-39).

Then, the first two verses in chapter twelve form an exhortation and provide instructions for Christians concerning faithfulness in the present race of the faith. Other individuals, *by faith*, have preceded Christians in the race, forming the "great cloud of witnesses"; and Christians, in like fashion, are exhorted to complete their race through 1) laying aside every encumbrance, and 2) exercising faithfulness in the task at hand - properly discharging one's duties concerning the talents and pounds within the scope of delegated responsibility as a servant in the house.

3. Let Us Run with Patience...Looking unto Jesus...

There is a parallel in Scripture between the way Christ endured Calvary, procuring our salvation, and the way we are to run the race, in possession of this salvation. Christ viewed Calvary in relation to that which lay ahead, and we are to view the race in which we are presently engaged after the same fashion.

The procurement of our salvation by Christ at Calvary was related to the joy set before Him, just as our running the present race is related to the same joy. Christ provided redemption in order that "we might receive the adoption of sons." He looked out ahead to the time when *many sons* would be brought "unto glory" (Gal. 4:5; Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:17-23). And we are to run the race of the faith with the same "sonship", portending *rulership*, in view.

At the conclusion of events surrounding Calvary, Christ sat down on the right hand of the throne of God. Prior to this, "All power" had been delivered into His hands, both "in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). But seated at His Father's right hand, rather than exercising this power, He is awaiting that day when His enemies will be made His "footstool" (Psa. 110:1; Heb. 1:13). Then He will rule from *His Own throne*, exercising His presently possessed power, as the great King-Priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Psa. 110:2ff; Heb. 5:5ff).

At the conclusion of the present race, Christians are to sit with Christ on His throne, as Christ, following the events of Calvary, sat down with His Father on His Father's throne. This will be *following* the adoption and *following* the time Christ takes the reins of government. Crowned Christians, seated on the throne, ruling as co-heirs with Christ, will then realize the purpose for the events of Calvary.

The entire sequence of events has been outlined in the opening verses of Hebrews, leading into Christ being anointed with the "oil of gladness [Christ being anointed *King*, with the 'joy' in view]" (1:2-9):

Christ has been appointed "heir of all things", with the ages having been planned around the pre-ordained activity of the Son (v. 2). After the events of Calvary, anticipating "the joy that was set before him", Christ "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (v. 3; Heb. 1:9; 12:2). In this position, unlike His position preceding Calvary (Heb. 2:9), He was made "so much better than the angels [an allusion to present angelic rule, though anticipating the time when Christ takes the kingdom (Heb. 2:5)]" (v. 4). He is God's *only begotten firstborn Son*, the One in possession of the rights of primogeniture (v. 5; John 3:16); and God is going to bring His Son into the world once again, with a view to superiority over angels as He rules from His Own throne, accompanied by "companions ['fellows' (v. 9) should be translated *companions*; this is the same word in the Greek text translated 'partakers' in Heb. 3:14]" (vs. 6-9).

An anointing with the "oil of gladness" has already occurred, but Christ and His companions (co-heirs) have yet to enter into "the joy" in view both at Calvary and in the present race of the faith.

Thou Wicked and Slothful Servant

Matthew 25:24-29

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

Luke 19:20-26

And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? 24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

The Lord's dealings with His household servants as set forth in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds are often treated by expositors as pertaining to issues surrounding one's eternal salvation or eternal damnation. However, such is not only theologically impossible, but teachings of this nature also serve to obscure that which is actually taught.

As stated before, no one - saved or unsaved - will ever stand in a future judgment where the issue at hand involves eternal salvation or eternal damnation. In every future judgment, the matter of one's possession or non-possession of eternal salvation will be a *past issue*, with judgment having already occurred: "*He that believeth on him is not condemned ['judged']*: but *he that believeth not is condemned ['judged'] already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*" (John 3:18). This is the reason that "no condemnation ['a rendering of judgment against']" awaits any Christian (Rom. 8:1). And this is also the reason that such a judgment cannot await the unbeliever either. He, as the believer, has already been judged relative to this matter, though the consequences of this judgment await a future date.

"Salvation" will be an issue in the Lord's reckoning with His servants as set forth in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, but not *eternal salvation*. The matter at hand concerns the Lord's dealings with His household servants on the basis of works emanating out of faithfulness in view of a future salvation - the *Salvation of the Soul*. One's presently possessed salvation - the salvation of the spirit - places him within the house, allowing him to occupy a responsible position under and for the Householder. It is his faithfulness or unfaithfulness to delegated responsibility for which he will one day answer, *not* his presence in the house.

In the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, the "wicked and slothful" servant was not only present in the house but he occupied a household position of the same order as those positions held by the "good and faithful" servants. He was one of the Householder's *Own servants* and had been assigned responsibility within the house just as those servants who later proved to be faithful. The distinguishing difference in the servants had to do with their *attitude toward delegated responsibility*. Two were shown to have been *faithful*, and one was shown to have been *unfaithful*. To press the issue beyond this point and read eternal salvation and eternal damnation into the matter does violence to the Scripture, not only at this point but elsewhere as well.

In both parables, the Householder's servants were accorded responsible positions in the same *location* (in the house) during the *same time* (the present dispensation); and this was followed by the servants rendering an account at the *same time* (the end of the present dispensation) in their *Lord's presence* (before His Judgment Seat). That is, *all* the stewards served together in the same place at the same time,

and they were *all* called forth together to render an account in the same place at the same time (although each individual has to stand alone in his own particular judgment).

Major problems exist on every hand when one attempts to view issues in these parables as pertaining to eternal salvation or eternal damnation. Such would necessitate the Lord calling saved and unsaved individuals alike into His service to exercise responsible positions in His house, followed by the same saved and unsaved individuals one day appearing before Him, at the same time and place, to render an account. Then, there's the matter of the basis upon which household servants are judged following their being called forth to render an account. Judgment occurs strictly on the basis of faithfulness to delegated responsibility. Then, beyond that is the matter of the outcome of this judgment, which has to do with the servants either being commended and rewarded or being rebuked and suffering loss *in relation to occupying or being denied positions in the kingdom*, not in relation to eternal salvation or eternal damnation.

An individual must be a servant in the house before responsibility can be delegated by the Householder. The impossibility of an unsaved person occupying a position of this nature can be easily seen by understanding Matt. 24:45 in the light of 1Cor. 2:14. In Matt. 24:45, a household servant was given the responsibility of providing food for other servants in the house. He was to give them "meat in due season", which has to do with Biblical doctrine surrounding the Lord's return and the coming kingdom. Other servants in the house were to understand and receive this message, something, which according to 1Cor. 2:14 would not be possible for unsaved individuals.

The things of the Spirit of God are *foolishness* to the "natural man ['soulical man' - a person whose life is dominated by his soul, referring to the unsaved]." Such a person cannot receive nor understand the things of the Spirit, for they are "spiritually discerned." An unsaved person does not possess a saved human spirit into which the message can be received; nor does he possess the indwelling Holy Spirit to lead him "into all truth" (John 3:6; 16:13-15; James 1:21).

Then, to say that eternal salvation and eternal damnation are in view in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds necessitates the saved and unsaved appearing in judgment together, something completely foreign to the teaching of all Scripture. A judgment of the saved and unsaved together, at the same time, would require God to judge once again that which He has already judged. Since such cannot occur, Scripture *always* presents separate judgments for saved and unsaved individuals, with the issue at hand *always* being something other than eternal salvation or eternal damnation. The issue surrounding one's eternal destiny in any future judgment will always be a settled, closed matter before judgment occurs.

Further, those rendering an account in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds either experience commendation and reward or experience rebuke and loss, with the faithful being accorded positions with Christ in the kingdom and the unfaithful being denied positions of this nature. And to read eternal verities into such a division would not only suggest that all Christians will be found faithful at the Judgment Seat but it would also suggest an equivalence between positions with Christ in the kingdom and one's eternal destiny.

1Cor. 3:11-15 clearly reveals that Christians at the Judgment Seat will experience both "reward" and "loss", a thought perfectly in line with that which is revealed in both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds; and the subject matter in both parables clearly has to do with "reward" or "loss" in relation to the *kingdom*, not with acceptance or rejection relative to one's eternal destiny.

The "wicked and slothful" *servant* in each parable, unlike the "good and faithful" *servants*, failed to properly exercise delegated responsibility in the house. *Failure* resulted in "loss." Not only was that which had been committed to his trust, belonging to the Householder, taken from him and given to another, but he was rejected for a position in the kingdom which the Householder had gone away to receive. Unfaithfulness to delegated responsibility in the house during the Householder's absence resulted in his being denied responsibility in the kingdom following the Householder's return (Luke 16:10, 11).

Called into His Presence

After Christ receives the kingdom from His Father, He is going to return for His household servants. They will be called forth from the earth to appear in His presence in the heavens. The "dead in Christ" will be raised, followed by those "which are alive and remain" being removed with the resurrected believers "to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1Cor. 15:51-57).

The removal of Christians at the time of rapture is not the same as the servants being called before Him to render an account as set forth in Luke 19:15. Appearing in Christ's presence at the time of rapture is a *general appearance*, but appearing in His presence at the Judgment Seat is a more *specific, personal appearance*. The latter follows the former.

At the time of Christ's return in glory, the present dispensation will have run its course. God's purpose for this dispensation - to acquire the rulers who will occupy responsible positions with Christ in the kingdom - will be complete. All Christians (both the dead and the living) will have been removed from the earth, with a view to bringing matters surrounding the present dispensation to a close. They will be removed into Christ's presence by rapture and subsequently appear before Him, on an individual basis, to ascertain "how much every man had gained by trading" (Luke 19:15).

The text in both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds specifically states that each servant - both faithful and unfaithful - personally "came" to the Lord in successive order to render an account concerning his stewardship (Matt. 25:20, 22, 24; Luke 19:16, 18, 20). The man with the five talents came and stood *alone* in his Lord's presence, and the Lord dealt with him *alone* on an *individual* basis. Then, in successive order, the man with the two talents came forth, followed by the man with the one talent. In each instance, the Lord's dealings with those in His house were the same - dealings of a *personal, individual* nature. And the same sequence of events within the Lord's judicial dealings with His servants is seen in the parable of the pounds.

At the future judgment of Christians, as set forth by these parables, each Christian - both faithful and unfaithful - will come forth, *separate from all others*, and stand *alone* in his Lord's presence in order to respond to one matter: faithfulness as a household servant to delegated responsibility. The Christian will personally answer to the One who had previously purchased him with His Own blood (allowing him to occupy a position as a servant in the house), placed him in a certain position with a specific calling (a particular position of servitude in the house), and provided him with the means whereby he could carry out the task at hand (provided him with His Own goods). The Christian can then either show how he had used the talents/pound to the Householder's advantage (Matt. 25:20, 22; Luke 19:16, 18), or he can attempt to show cause why he had not used the talents/pound to the Householder's advantage (Matt. 25:24, 25; Luke 19:20, 21).

In either case, the Lord's judgment will be perfectly just and righteous. Commendation and reward or

chastisement and loss will be commensurate with exactly how the Christian either managed or mismanaged the Lord's goods within the scope of his individual calling. Findings at the Judgment Seat of an *individual* nature will determine positions with Christ in the kingdom of a like *individual* nature.

Receiving a Just Recompense

In both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, the distinguishing difference in servitude, revealed in the Householder's presence, in each instance, had to do with the servants' use or nonuse of the Master's goods through trading and trafficking during the time of His absence. In each parable, two servants were shown to have brought forth different amounts of increase through a *proper use* of their Master's goods, while another servant was shown to have brought forth no increase at all through *nonuse* of his Master's goods. The servant bringing forth no increase, in each parable, had stored his Master's goods for safekeeping in a place where they could *not* be used. The servant in the parable of the talents had buried his Master's goods in the ground (Matt. 25:25), and the servant in the parable of the pounds had placed his Master's goods inside a napkin (Luke 19:20). In either instance, no increase could be realized.

The *use* of the Master's goods (resulting in an increase) or the *nonuse* of these goods (resulting in no increase) is the central thought around which everything in both parables move at the time the Master's servants are called into his presence to render an account. A *misuse* of these goods does not really come under consideration per se, though this is something which Christ had previously discussed in the presence of His disciples, recorded in the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16:1ff. In this parable, the same appearance in his Master's presence, the same accounting relative to his stewardship, and the same end result were experienced by the servant through *misuse* as experienced by the servants through *nonuse* in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds.

In the parable of the unjust steward, word had reached the Householder concerning His steward's misuse of His goods; and the steward was subsequently called into the Householder's presence to render an account concerning his stewardship. His mismanagement, brought out into the open while *in his Master's presence*, resulted in rebuke and loss. He was rebuked, and his stewardship was taken away. That which had previously been committed to his trust was removed from his possession, and he could no longer act on his Master's behalf within the house (Luke 16:1, 2).

Exactly the same thing can be seen in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds. In each parable, the servant who had hidden his Master's goods for safekeeping and not used them was called into his Master's presence to render an account. And that which was revealed, while *in his Master's presence*, resulted in rebuke and loss. His stewardship was supposed to have been the means through which he could have successfully run the race of the faith, allowing him to win a crown and be elevated into the position of ruler in the Householder's kingdom at the time of His return (he, as a household steward in possession of a portion of the Householder's goods, through faithfulness to his calling [his particular place of responsibility in the house], could bring forth an increase [bring forth fruit]. This would allow him to win a crown, qualifying him to be elevated into the position of co-heir with his Master in the kingdom which He had gone away to receive). However, *failure in stewardship* would mean *rejection as ruler*. The unfaithful steward would be rejected as unfit to occupy a position in the kingdom, with chastisement following.

The Lord will not take lightly the matter of household servants, through unfaithfulness, spurning proffered positions as co-heirs with Him in the kingdom which He has gone away to receive. Unfaithful

servants will receive treatment of such a harsh nature at the hands of their Lord that many students of the Word turn completely away from the thought of saved individuals being in view. To them it is unthinkable that the Lord would extend treatment of this nature to redeemed individuals, His Own people. This is the main reason that issues surrounding one's eternal salvation or eternal damnation are often read into the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, with the unfaithful servant in each parable being looked upon as an unsaved individual.

However, the question concerning how the Lord could extend treatment of the nature revealed in these parables to one of His Own does not address the issue at all. The question asked in a proper Biblical framework would have to be just the opposite: "How could the Lord be perfectly just and righteous *without* extending treatment of this nature to one of His Own?" If faithfulness calls for commendation and reward (which it does), then unfaithfulness *must* call for rebuke and loss (which it does). The inverse of one *must* be true relative to the other; else the Lord's perfect justice and righteousness could not be satisfied.

The Servants' Plea

The unfaithful servants in both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds are seen pleading their individual cases before the Lord in a frank, open, and unrestrained manner. Nothing seems to be held back as they relate the reasons for the particular course of action which each had taken while a servant in the Master's house in charge of a portion of the Master's goods. The appeal by each servant is not that of trying to hide or cover up what he had done. To the contrary, it is just the opposite. They both appeal to their Lord, while in His presence, in an open, almost brazen manner, relating *exactly* what had occurred.

In that coming day, nothing will be held back. All things will be "naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Christ spoke openly during His earthly ministry, saying *nothing* in secret (John 18:20); and He would expect the same from His servants, though the situation is often quite different today. However, the day is coming when *nothing* will remain hidden or be kept secret (Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17). Paul, in his message to those at Rome, stated, "...God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:16).

(Paul proclaimed both the gospel of grace and the gospel of glory; but the reference in Rom. 2:16 can pertain only to *the gospel of glory*, for no future judgment of the "secrets of men" awaits individuals in relation to the gospel of grace. Paul's gospel in this passage [and elsewhere in the Pauline epistles where the expressions "my gospel" or "our gospel" appear] must be looked upon as the good news ["meat in due season"] concerning the coming glory of Christ, to be proclaimed *to stewards in the house* [Matt. 24:45; Rom. 16:25; 1Cor. 4:3, 4; Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:1-6; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Tim. 1:11; 2 Tim. 2:8]. This gospel deals with the message concerning present faithfulness of household servants in view of their occupying positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom [e.g. note the context of 2 Tim. 2:8].)

The unfaithful servants in both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds accused their Lord of the same thing in order to justify their nonuse of the goods entrusted to their care. They accused their Lord of reaping a harvest and deriving an increase through the labors of others, which was true but completely one-sided from their perspective. They looked upon the entire matter from a carnal, humanistic viewpoint, rejecting spiritual values. They envisioned their Lord doing these things *only* for self-gain, and they gave little or no thought to the revealed reason (which they should have known) concerning why the Householder was conducting affairs in His house after this fashion.

The Householder had a relationship with His servants of this nature for a *purpose* involving far more than just self-gain, as supposed by the unfaithful servants. The Householder, *for a particular reason*, had delivered His goods to His servants and assigned them responsible positions in the house, with a view to their bringing forth an increase (bringing forth fruit). Servitude during the present day of trials and testings would be the *means* through which the Householder could one day elevate His servants from positions in the house to positions in the kingdom. They, through faithfulness in lesser responsibility would be allowed to show themselves qualified to assume greater responsibility (Matt. 25:29; Luke 16:10-12; 19:26); and upon the Householder's reception of the kingdom and return in possession of the kingdom, those servants having shown themselves qualified could be elevated from *household servants* of their Master to *co-heirs* with their Master.

The self-gain which the Householder would eventually realize was *that of gaining co-heirs, companions to ascend the throne with Him in His kingdom*; on the surface perhaps one could say the Householder had reaped where He had not sown and gathered where He had not winnowed in order to bring this to pass. But we must remember that our diligence is to be faithful in every thing – the actual work is accomplished through the Holy Spirit. *For without me, you can do nothing (John 15:5)*. The work in the field was to be accomplished by the servants, using the Master's possessions (everything belonged to the Master of the house); and the work was to be accomplished on the Master's behalf. The Householder, *through this means*, was extending to His servants the *privilege* of one day being elevated to the highest position of honor and glory one could possibly receive. They would be recompensed for their labors by being elevated into positions as co-heirs with Him in the kingdom. The fruits of their labors would not only benefit the Householder but the servants as well, with the Householder and His servants *both realizing the results together*.

But to God belongs all the glory, for it is He who actually accomplishes the work.

The Lord's Response

The thought of labor for the Lord during the present day in view of co-heirship with Him during that coming day is something which appears to have completely escaped the attention of the unfaithful servants in both parables. The unfaithful servants could not grasp at all what their Master had in mind through requiring labor on His behalf. Ignorance of His plans and purposes for both present and future times not only led them into gross error but it caused them to govern their activities as household servants after such a fashion that they mismanaged the Householder's affairs, ultimately resulting in their being rejected for positions in the kingdom. There was *no increase for their Master*, resulting in *no advancement for them*.

The profitless servants in both parables had failed to properly conduct their affairs within the scope of delegated household responsibility. They had not used the talent/pound to bring forth an increase (Matt. 25:27; Luke 19:23 ["usury" in these verses is the translation of a Greek word meaning *interest* on money loaned or invested]). The Lord's sharp rebuke, followed by chastisement, was occasioned by the dual ramifications resulting from the servants' disobedience. Appearing in the Lord's presence as profitless servants meant: 1) *no gain for the Lord*; and 2) *loss for the servants*.

So what exactly does our Lord charge him with? Unbelief, unregeneration, rebellion, apostasy, adultery, theft, murder? No! It is simply a servant of God who has made nothing of his life. All he has done wrong is to withhold his powers from serving God; he hoarded, when he ought to have expended; he had no

sacred sense of responsibility. The parable is not for gross sinners; the warning is for those who, being equipped of God for a sphere of activity in His kingdom, hide their talent. The third servant says, "As I cannot be so holy as God requires, I give up the attempt to satisfy such strictness; I object profoundly to the doctrine of reward according to works, and deny all responsibility in a servant of Christ beyond his responsibility to maintain the gift of grace with which he was entrusted at his conversion". But his answer (as the Lord says) implies that he knew the truth. The Judge answers, "Your very consciousness of the severity of the principle ought to have made you more careful, not less, to meet its requirements". Thereby the wicked servant bears testimony with his own mouth to the innermost truth, and the most perfect right, according to which the Lord requires fruit from what He sows or gives – that God demands fruits and works. For the believer to have at his judgment only what he had at his conversion will be his condemnation.

Because of the servants' failure, those portions of the Lord's goods which had previously been entrusted to their care were taken from them and given to servants who had already been judged and had been shown to have brought forth increases. Such would add to these faithful servants' possessions, which could only reflect on their positions in the kingdom. The thought can only be that servants coming into possession of *additional amounts of the Lord's goods* through this means will receive *additional responsibility in the kingdom*.

The principle governing this matter is set forth very succinctly in both parables: "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he shall have abundance [which can only be a reference to 'abundance in the kingdom' derived through an increase of the Lord's goods in one's possession; the faithful servant will have already been elevated into a position as co-heir with his Lord at this time, and an increase in the Lord's goods, of the nature this would produce, is shown in the parable of the pounds to be directly related to *increased responsibility in the kingdom* (Luke 19:16-19)]; but from him who has nothing, even what he has shall be taken away [which, in view of that realized by the faithful servant through a reception of the unfaithful servant's goods, can only refer to 'that which could have been his in the kingdom' through realizing the purpose for his salvation and particular calling]" (Matt. 25:29, Luke 19:26).

Numerous positions in the kingdom which the Lord has gone away to receive *must* be filled upon His return. The failure of a servant to show himself qualified will not leave the position which could have been his unfilled. The Lord will simply assign that portion to another servant, adding to the responsibility which that servant will have already been accorded. When all factors are considered, no other meaning can really be derived from the Lord's action of taking from one servant and giving to another servant at the Judgment Seat.

Concluding Remarks:

A major problem in Christian circles today is the widespread ignorance concerning the relationship between *the present dispensation* and *the coming kingdom*. Pastors, over the years, have not dispensed "meat in due season"; and the ultimate result will be the appearance of multitudes of Christians before the Lord, at His Judgment Seat, in the same condition as the unfaithful servants in the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds. Ignorance of the Lord's plans and purposes can very easily result in a present mismanagement of household affairs, which will result in disqualification for future management of affairs in the kingdom.

Cast Outside

Matthew 25:30

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The nature of the treatment awaiting the unfaithful servant at the hands of his Lord in the parable of the talents has been completely misunderstood by numerous Christians, leading them to conclude that the Lord was dealing with an unsaved person at this point in the parable. The Lord sharply rebuked the unfaithful servant, commanded that the talent be removed from his possession, and then commanded that he be cast into outer darkness.

The main problem which most Christians have with this part of the parable is the ultimate outcome of the Lord's dealings with His unfaithful servant - the fact that he was cast into *outer darkness*. "Outer darkness", within their way of thinking, is to be equated with *Hell* (the final abode of the unsaved in *the lake of fire*); and knowing that a Christian can never be cast into the Lake of Fire, those equating "outer darkness" with the Lake of Fire are left with no recourse other than to look upon the Lord's dealings with the unfaithful servant and the Lord's dealings with the unsaved as synonymous.

It probably goes without saying that had the Lord treated the unfaithful servant in a somewhat different fashion, very few Christians reading this passage would even think about questioning his salvation, for the response of the unfaithful servant would be perfectly in line with such verses as 1Cor. 3:13, 15 and present no indication of an unsaved condition. But the Lord's sharp rebuke, the removal of the talent from his possession, and his being cast into outer darkness constitute what many view as a sequence of events which could not possibly befall a Christian. The full meaning of the outer darkness will be discussed in a later chapter. However, suffice it to say for the moment that such consequences are indeed dire.

Continued in Volume Two

THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL

Volume Two

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Disinheritance

When you first understand the truths about to be considered in the remainder of this book, you may feel somewhat like the first person to see and explore a new world - that you have been privileged to go where possibly no other man had ever gone before. But there were a few great men of God, living in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, who had caught glimpses of these same truths and briefly mentioned them in their writings: men such as D. M. Panton, Robert Govett, G. H. Pember, and Watchman Nee. Among those currently living, Arlen Chitwood has taught extensively and with great excellence on these truths. I have drawn heavily from the writings of these individuals in this book. In this chapter you will see the beginning principles of these truths.

TWO RELATIONSHIPS

As a way of introducing these beginning principles, one must have an understanding of *two relationships*. The first is the relationship between the "law of God", and the *lost* person, whereas, the second relationship is between the "commandments of Christ" and the *saved* person. The first relationship says "*do* and have eternal life", whereas, the second relationship says "*do* and have millennial life". The first relationship says if you fail to keep the law of God, you will suffer forever in the lake of fire; whereas, the second relationship says if you fail to keep the commandments of Christ, you will suffer loss for a millennium in the "outer darkness".

Contrasting These Relationships

Whereas, the law of God is given in the Old Testament, the commandments of Christ are in the New – specifically, although not exclusively, the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5-7). Whereas, the law of God separates an unregenerate sinner from the presence of God eternally, the commandments of Christ will separate an unrepentant saint from the presence of Christ for a millennium. Whereas, the final judgment for lost sinners is called "the second death" which last forever (Rev. 20:14, 21:8), the judgment of carnal Christians is also called "the second death" (Rev. 2:11; 20:6), which will last only for a millennium. In view of this, the Scriptures teach that there is such a thing as an "eternal death", and a "millennial death".

THE FIRST RELATIONSHIP

In presenting this first relationship it would be well to first summarize its results upon mankind. Then, after we get a clear view of its powers, we will be able to understand the victory that is ours through Christ.

The Commandments of the Law of God

Eternal death occurs when an unbeliever dies in his sins. (John 8:21, 24). This is a result of his falling short of the perfect standard of righteousness demanded by the law. The Scriptures declare, "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one (point), he is guilty of all (James 2:10). And again, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Since it is impossible for man to keep the law because of his weakness (a totally ruined and depraved state), God sent His Son, who was born in the likeness of sinful

flesh for the purposes of fulfilling the righteousness of the law, and to take upon Himself the demands of the law - even death on the Cross - for every one that would believe on Him. (Rom. 8:3). Therefore, He has redeemed us from the curse of death by willingly becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13; Rom. 10:4). This redemption, however, only becomes ours through *faith* in Him. God plainly tells us that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith of Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16); Rom. 4:5). Therefore, salvation (of the spirit) is by faith only – without works. Most of you are probably in agreement up to this point.

Crucified with Christ

Galatians 2:19

For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

When one trusts in Christ's finished work on the Cross, he becomes dead *through* the law and *to* the law. To illustrate this, let's suppose a criminal who has been convicted to die in the state's electric chair dies of a heart attack before he is executed. In this case, he would be dead *to* the law, but not *through* the law. "To the law" means that the law has no power to judge and punish one who is dead. "Through the law" means that the sentence of the law (death) was carried out. Thus, only if the criminal is executed by the state is the law satisfied. For then he would have died *through* the law, and as such would be dead *to* the law.

Now, let us suppose that another criminal was executed and died *through* the law, but the next day he was reported as being *alive* and walking down a street in the local village. What could the sentencing judge do? Could he have him executed again to satisfy the law? The answer to this would have to be no! This is because the criminal had *already* satisfied the law by dying *through* the law. Therefore, the judge would be obligated to count him as "judicially dead" *to* the law, even though he was alive.

This is exactly what happens to the believer when he first believes. He dies *through the law*. That is, God counts him as dying with Christ on the Cross. Therefore, since he has died *through the law*, he becomes dead *to the law* (the law having no power over him as to sin's penalty). For the law cannot judge a *dead* man. Yet one will say, but I am alive. How can I be dead? The answer is that you are "judicially dead". That is, God counts you as literally dying on the Cross in Christ even though you are "practically" alive. This is what Paul meant when he said "...*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*" (Gal. 2:20).

Reckon Yourself Dead

Romans 6:11

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Before a believer can serve God and bring forth fruit, he must *reckon* that he is dead. The Greek word for "reckon" is "logizomai". This is an accounting term that means to take an inventory and to arrive at the exact answer. A believer must conclude exactly that he is dead *through* the law before he can serve Christ. And if one is dead, how then can he lose his salvation? Can a dead man be brought back into the courtroom in order to be sentenced to death? No! A thousand times, no! He is dead to the law already, and can only be alive in Christ Jesus. For we not only *died* in Him, but we were *buried* with him, and then we were *raised* with Him (Rom. 6:4), and at the present time, we are *sitting* with Him in heavenly

places (Eph. 2:6). But again you may say, "I am here on earth. How can I have been buried, risen, and in heaven?" Because God "judicially" counts it as so. And if God counts it as so, who are we to argue the point? So while we have judicially passed through the portals of heaven with Christ when He ascended, we are yet here on earth in a physical sense, alive in a manner in which we have never been before, "*reckoning ourselves to be dead to the law*", so that we may serve the Lord (Rom. 7:6).

Romans 7:6

But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

From all of this we can draw several conclusions:

- (1) One must die *through* the law and *to* the law in order for him to live unto God (Gal. 2:19).
- (2) When he dies in Christ "judicially", the Holy Spirit seals him and gives to him eternal life (Eph. 1:13). This is when his *spirit* is saved.
- (3) The beginning of the Spirit controlled life is when he *reckons* himself as being dead to the law and alive to Christ (Rom. 7:4). This is the beginning of how his *soul* is saved.
- (4) In the realistic or practical sense, every sin that a Christian commits since he has "judicially" died *through* the law must be cleansed under the "law of Christ". This brings into effect Jesus Christ's present work as the High Priest, where he *cleanses* us from all sins as we confess them (1John 1:9). This is a prerequisite for the salvation of our *soul*.

To sum this up: judicial death *through* the law speaks of the salvation of the spirit; whereas recognizing that you are dead *to* the law speaks of the beginning principles of the Salvation of the Soul.

Romans 7:4

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

THE SECOND RELATIONSHIP

The second relationship is between the Christian and the "law of Christ" (sometimes called the commandments of Christ). Those Christians who keep this law will gain the *inheritance* at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Whereas, those Christians who do not keep this law will suffer *loss*.

The Commandments of Christ

Galatians 6:2

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Matthew 28:19-20

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Once a Christian has experienced the salvation of the *spirit*, he is placed under a new set of commandments called the "law of Christ". These commandments were personally given by Jesus Himself in the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew, chapters 5-7), and various other places. Those that keep them will have their *soul* saved. Those that fail to keep them will suffer ruin and destruction outside of the glory of the kingdom for a thousand years.

Some will surely say at this point, "How can these things be? I couldn't keep the old set of laws. And now I'm supposed to keep a new set of laws?" The answer lies in the power of Christ. While on the Cross, He fulfilled the demands of the law for you in taking the *penalty* upon Himself. When you trusted in this finished work of Christ, two things happened. First you were declared by the law itself as being judicially dead and outside of its power to condemn. Secondly, Christ took up His permanent residence in your life (the sealing of the Holy Spirit), where He now stands ready to personally and realistically fulfill His own laws in and *through* your life. This fulfillment becomes practical only as you yield your life to Him through faith, and allow Him to live His life *through* you. And the faith that you must daily exercise can only come from your daily growth in the Word (Rom. 10:17).

Romans 10:17

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Nevertheless, some will say, "under grace there are no laws; we have perfect freedom". But this is error. There must be a law that governs every dispensation, including the dispensation of grace: else there would be chaos. Therefore, for this dispensation, the laws are given in the "Sermon on the Mount", and explained in the epistles. Furthermore, our Lord tells us that all of these commandments of Christ are fulfilled in one word, and that word is *love*. Thus, according to our text, the governing law of grace is love. When one allows Christ to live *through* him, he will produce that love which will fulfill all of the commandments of Christ

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The Vital Importance of Water Baptism

This "newness of life" does not begin until the believer is baptized in water. Thus we see the absolute necessity of baptism in order that the old nature may be put to death; and in the New Testament this was always done as soon after belief in the gospel as possible.

Romans 6:4-7

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For IF we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

It is my conviction that the ordinance of baptism is not merely symbolic – that the old nature – referred to above as "*our old man*" (the body of sin) is not destroyed (put to death) until baptism takes place. This is

clearly shown in the above verses to occur at the time of water baptism. The spirit of a man is born again at the point of *believing in his heart*; but a man is not "freed from sin" until water baptism. Hence the urgent immediacy of water baptism is stressed throughout the book of Acts: Act 2:38,41; 8:12-13,36,38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15,33; 18:8; 22:16; Gal 3:27),

Thus we see the absolute necessity of baptism in order that the old nature may be put to death; and in the New Testament this was always done as soon after belief in the gospel as possible.

Furthermore, it is apparent that the Holy Spirit does not come into a born again person in order to provide the power to walk in this newness of life until the act of water baptism.

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 19:1-6

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

In the above passage, Paul found certain disciples in Ephesus. It is apparent from the passage that these disciples had believed in the coming Messiah as preached by John the Baptist; this belief was sufficient that they were indeed born again (the circumcision of the heart) and were prepared to receive the Lord (Him which should come after Him – Christ Jesus) through John's ministry. They had received only the baptism of John. It was necessary that they should be baptized in the name of Jesus before the Holy Ghost could come on them.

There has always been, in the Old Testament and in the New, only one way to be saved – by grace through faith. Abraham *believed* (had faith in what God said), and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Rom 4:3). In the nation of Israel, they were all sons of Israel after the flesh. But only those who had truly believed in God's word were saved (Israel after the Spirit). In spite of the fact that the nation of Israel rejected Jesus, yet there was still a remnant who believed and were saved. Even in the days of Elijah it is written:

1 Kings 19:18

Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

The remnant of the Jews has always been those who by faith were circumcised in the heart, and not only in the flesh:

Romans 2:28-29

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

The difference in the salvation of those in the Old Testament and those in the New Testament was that the Holy Ghost did not come to abide in them in order to give them the *power* to obey the law. This could not come until after Jesus fulfilled the law and then was glorified:

John 7:38-39

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. 39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Small wonder, then, that our new covenant is referred to as a better covenant:

Hebrews 8:6

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

The old nature and the new nature are referred to in Scripture as the "old man" and the "new man".

Ephesians 4:22-24

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Colossians 3:9-10

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Dead but Not Alive

Romans 6:11

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Is it possible for a believer to be dead but still not alive? The answer is "yes"; otherwise there would be no need for the above command. This can happen if a person has not *reckoned* himself *dead* to the law and *alive* to Christ by faith. This can be illustrated as one dying, being buried, and then remaining in his grave when he has the power residing in him to rise to a new life. Another question would be: Will that same person be eternally saved? The answer again is "yes", since he died with Christ on the Cross. However, he cannot *begin* to qualify to enter the Kingdom of Heaven until he first becomes *alive* to Christ by faith. The purpose of this newness of life is so that Christ can produce spiritual fruit *through* him, which is necessary in order to *enter* the kingdom.

After water baptism, coming alive in Christ continues by reckoning yourself dead in Christ, even though you are realistically alive in the flesh. This reckoning produces assurance of your salvation. Once you know you are saved (know you are dead to the law), then the Holy Spirit begins your growth in the Word, from the *milk* to the *meat*. It is the feeding on the Word that automatically builds your faith (Rom. 10:17).

The Penalty for Not Keeping the Commandments of Christ

The Disinherited Christian

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Galatians 5:18-21

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The epistles of Paul are mainly given to teach that which is necessary for a believer to have and maintain, in order that he may inherit the Kingdom of God (same as the Kingdom of Heaven). They also warn against disobeying the commandments of Christ - the result of which is being disinherited. The two above passages of Scripture will serve to illustrate this.

In the first passage, Paul was pointing out to the Corinthian Church that some of their members were breaking the law of Christ by willfully committing the sins that he listed here (the word "some" in verse 11 tells us that some of the members were *not* involved). Somehow, this Church, like the Church of today, apparently believed that only the lost (unrighteous) would not inherit the kingdom, and that the saved (righteous) would automatically inherit it, no matter how they lived their lives on earth. However, Paul tells them to "be not deceived", for neither would *they* (the saved) inherit the kingdom if they continued to commit such sins and not be *washed* (verse 11). Once again, we see the necessity of the office of Christ's High Priesthood during this Church age, where He makes intercession before the throne of God for our sins and cleanses them with His blood. However, this work is only effective for those believers who confess their sins and are willing to forsake them (1John 1:9).

To those who would still maintain that the persons committing the unrighteous acts in the above two passages are unsaved, I would pose this question: Why would Paul even bother to point out to the Corinthians or the Galatians that these, if "unsaved", were not going to inherit the kingdom? Surely it would be obvious to even a baby Christian that these, if "unsaved", were going to Hell, and are not even under consideration to inherit the kingdom? Lost people don't go to Hell because they commit ungodly acts; they go to Hell because they do not believe in Jesus Christ:

John 3:18

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The second passage shows Paul's disapproval of the Galatians, who placed themselves back under the law and were trying to satisfy it through their *own* works. These works are called *law-works* and represent the activity of the old nature in playing Christian. Today we have the same thing being promoted by the Church. They are called Church programs, or Church work. They are the opposite of the works of love, which is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Thus, the works of the flesh (the old nature) are listed in the above second passage, and represent the fruit of a *carnal* believer who fails to trust in the Holy Spirit to produce His own works *through* him. The believer that does not trust in the leadership of the Holy Spirit is in danger of practicing these sins, which will cause him to *lose* his inheritance. Notice Paul's warning in verse 21: "...*they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*". The word "do" in the Greek text is the word "prassos", which means *to practice*. This speaks of Christians who willfully practice sin without any sorrow or intent on their part to confess them (1John 1:9).

The Non-Overcomer

In the seven letters to the seven Churches (Rev. Chapters 2-3), Jesus reveals to us the "overcomer" as opposed to the "non-overcomer". Here, he gives a clear view of those who will *inherit* the kingdom and receive special rewards, as opposed to those who will be *disinherited*. It will be helpful to understand that these seven letters have four valid interpretative applications, which are as follows:

- (1) They were written to seven literal Churches of the first century.
- (2) They were written as a prophecy of seven Church periods, or phases, which will be manifest consecutively during the Church age.
- (3) They are written to seven different kinds of Churches.
- (4) They are all written to each individual believer.

It is to this last interpretation that we focus our attention here.

Notice that at the end of each letter, our Lord says, "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches*". With this admonishment, we are led to believe that the messages to all of the Churches are but one continuous message to the individual who desires to rule and reign with Christ.

1. Those of Ephesus lost their first love (loving the Lord with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength, and watching for His soon return; this includes loving His Word). Paul describes this "first love" as those who "love his appearing". In the context of this verse, we see that this crown, the symbol of ruling and reigning with Christ in the coming kingdom, is *only* given to them who "love his appearing".

2 Timothy 4:8

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Jesus says whosoever repents and returns to his first love will be an *overcomer*, and will be given the special privilege of eating the tree of life.

Revelation 2:7

..... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

All believers will eventually eat of the tree of life. But the overcomers will be part of the first resurrection, and will receive this "life" at that time; the others will have to wait one thousand years until the second (last) resurrection. To eat of the Tree of Life means to be given a resurrected body which can never die again. On the principle of "first mention" in biblical interpretation, we see this said of the Tree of Life in Genesis:

Genesis 3:22

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

2. Those of the Smyrna Church were being tried with special trials and tribulations to test their faithfulness. Jesus says those who are faithful unto death will be given a "crown of life", but those who fall away will be hurt of the *second death* (Rev. 2:8-11).

3. Those of Pergamos teach and allow to be taught the *doctrine of Balaam* which says: "because you are the sons of God, you can do as you choose without punishment or loss of reward" (Num 25:1-3; 31:16). Those who turn from this doctrine will be *overcomers* and will be given "hidden manna and a white stone" (special privileges to feed on the deep things of Christ during his earthly walk, and in the age to come a high award or rank in the kingdom) (Rev. 2:12-17).

4. Those of Thyatira (historically, the dark ages of the Roman Catholic Church) become overcomers by not partaking of this Church's sins and sinful teachings of spiritual idolatry and fornication. They will rule over nations with a rod of iron, and be given the morning star (Rev. 2:18-29). Physically speaking, we know the morning star in the sky is Venus. It has two characteristics: it being the first star to appear in the sky at dawn as well as being the first one at dusk. One day the Lord shall be seen by the whole world (Mal 4:2 – "*the sun of righteousness [shall] arise*"). But those who see the morning star are necessarily awake much earlier - the vast majority is still asleep. These who see the morning star are the overcomers. Because, as the five wise virgins, they are not "fast asleep" (see discussion on the Parable of the Ten Virgins), but are watching for the Lord's return. These will be taken in the firstfruits rapture.

5. Those of Sardis are saved, but *that is all*. However, those that will grow in the Word, hold fast, repent of sins, and watch for His coming will be *overcomers* and will have a white garment. Those that fail will be non-overcomers and be *blotted out of* the "book of life" (lose their right to enter the kingdom) (Rev. 3:1-6). Again, this pertains to salvation of the soul only, and does not pertain to salvation of the spirit, which we can never lose. The great God Who blotted these names out is also able to restore these names before the Great White Throne judgment. An example of this "blotting out" and subsequent restoration can be seen in what God said of His covenant people, Israel:

Hosea 1:9-10

9 Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

The Book of Life will list those who comprise the Church of the Firstborn, who will inherit eternal life [life for the age] at the Judgment Seat of Christ.) These are written in a book in heaven (perhaps the same) which Hebrews describes:

Hebrews 12:23

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

6. Those of Philadelphia who overcome will be given the highest rank or privilege in the kingdom. They will become pillars in the temple and have written on themselves the name of the city of God. (The "pillar" is not to be taken literally – it is a term used to denote a leader [see Gal. 2:9]). At present, they are counted as *already* having crowns and are admonished to *hold fast* so that no one can take them (Rev. 3:7-13). These overcomers are also promised in verse 3:10 that they will be kept from the "*hour of temptation which will come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth*" – in other words, the overcomers are promised to be taken in the firstfruits rapture.

7. Those of Laodicea have become rich in the things of the world and are saying "we have need of nothing". Yet Jesus says that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, and as such are "lukewarm" (no power) and will be "spewed out of His mouth" (lose their inheritance). However, anyone who *overcomes* will be allowed to sit with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:14-22).

The careful student of the Word will see from the first *four* letters a composite picture of the beginning and ending state of an apostate Christian (one falling away from God). Then, in the *fifth* and *sixth* letters, he will see the growth of a newborn Christian to full maturity. Then in the *seventh*, a falling away of that Christian due to prosperity and the worship of mammon. The apostasy in the first four letters begins by *leaving* the Word, whereas the apostasy of the seventh is the result of the *prosperity* of this world.

Notice the three steps of apostasy in the first four letters:

- (1) The loss of their first love, His appearing - the Word of the Kingdom - which caused them to fall into special trials and tribulations for the purposes of bringing them back.
- (2) A further fall into accepting false teachings called the doctrine of Balaam.
- (3) The final step in accepting the teaching of spiritual idolatry and fornication to such a degree that the apostate does not want Christ to rule over him.

Finally, notice that in the seventh letter, the cause for the first step in the fall (leaving the Word) is prosperity and power in this world.

The Two Overcomings

The First Overcoming

The first of the two great overcoming named in Scripture is our Lord's.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

The "world" is all the mass of temptation, allurements to sin, ungodly habits, and unholy life which make up our present environment. By steadily, unceasingly, and completely resisting its pressure, Jesus overcame. The term is most expressive - an "overcomer" - it implies pressure, resistance, battle, victory, over that which calls for beating down and subduing; it is constant effort carried through to a victorious issue. *Never to sin*, in spite of fierce and unceasing temptation, is to be an absolute overcomer; and One only ever so overcame – His name is Jesus Christ.

Faith

Now this conquest of our Lord is the victory of all His saints. "*God giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (I Cor. 15:57): for "this is the victory that *hath* overcome the world, *even our faith*" (1 John 5:4). Not 'will' overcome, but 'hath' overcome (R.V.); yet not 'Christ,' but 'we': *for faith transfers Christ's conquest to me: I have overcome in Christ*; for He and I are one in this legal sense.

From the first moment of faith the victory of every disciple is an assured fact: "*whatsoever* is begotten of God" - the whole mass of the regenerate - "*overcometh* the world: and this is the victory that *hath* overcome the world, *even our faith*."

Our Lord inflicted a deadly wound upon the world of evil; the head of the Serpent is bruised, and its writhings are but symptoms of a mortal agony; and sin in the flesh (indwelling sin) was executed once for all upon the cross: *and all this perfect and eternal victory is ours by simple faith*.

The Second Overcoming

But another great overcoming is named in Scripture; not past, but present and future; and not for salvation, but for reward. *Seven times our Lord invokes every member of His Churches to become an overcomer*; attaching a particular reward to each believer who achieves it, and warnings of tangible displeasure to all who fail. For every believer has against him evil men; the whole mass of worldly atmosphere and tradition; his own flesh, dragging him down; and evil spirits, incessantly active. A living soul has against it the pressure of an entire world.

Moody once wrote: "The reason why so many Christians fail all through life is just this – *they underestimate the strength of the enemy*." Therefore our Lord's invocation, repeated seven times in substance, is this:

Revelation 3:21-22

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Works

Now we thus arrive at God's duplex truth. Compared with the world, all believers are overcomers; compared with one another, some are overcomers, and some are not: for the first overcoming is by simple faith, whereas the second is by unswerving obedience. The second overcoming is not a sudden act, or the victory of a moment, or a rush of holy emotion. It is a confirmed *habit* of goodness - the long wind, the hard biceps, and the iron muscle of the unwavering, unswerving runner. It is not a victorious battle, but a victorious *campaign*. It is on this ground that our Lord, and certain selected believers with Him, is rewarded.

Isaiah 53:12

Therefore (because He has suffered) will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Hebrews 1:9

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Responsibility fulfilled - not privilege possessed - is the ground of all reward. Without a holy violence, blessedly aggressive until the end, there can be no entrance to the Millennial Kingdom; unless we *storm* it, we shall never enter it: for:

Matthew 11:12

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

It was by His sufferings and His death, and not by the glory He had before the world was - and as the *Servant* of Jehovah, not as the *Son* of God - that our Lord acquired the vast heritage (Psa. 2:8) which other conquerors have won by the cannon and the battleship: so also, for the disciple, power and glory and thrones lie open; the world is to be the "spoil" that shall be divided: *but the path to Olivet is the hard, rugged, narrow road that lies across Calvary.*

Revelation 2:26

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Assurance

Now the practical import of it all is tremendous. All discipleship is a battle; it is a battle that *can* be won; it is a battle which can issue in a victory - the greatest that can now be won in the universe - and it is a battle that *every* disciple can win. For we start with "the full assurance of faith":

Hebrews 10:19

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

Our eternal life, based on the covering blood of the Atonement, is as sure as God. But a vast vista opens up beyond:

Hebrews 6:11

And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

I am not to *hope* that I am saved, but to *believe* it: but at the same time, I am not to *believe* I have won the prize, but to *hope* that I shall win it. For only "the end" can reveal how I have run. But the more battles we endure, and the more mileage we cover, the more we can mature to the full *assurance* of hope.

The Three Classes of Non-Overcomers

Proverbs 1:22

How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

Proverbs 1:24-29

Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; 27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. 28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: 29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

In this passage, there are apparently three classes of non-overcomers who will be disinherited before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The least of these are called the "simple". This describes the average Church members of today who are spiritually naive. They could represent the antitype of Esau when he failed to value his birthright, and sold it for a mess of pottage. The next, are the "fools" who hate knowledge. These could be the pastors and teachers as well as the layman who refuse (because of their intellectual and spiritual pride) further growth in the Word. They think they already know it all. The last category in this Scripture contains the "scorners", who are apostates (those who have willingly fallen away and are against the Word). These comprise a different stratum of believers. They are those who have grown to see the *meat* of the Word, and fallen away, and they are those who see no further than the *milk* of the Word and fall away. They are found in the seminary as well as in the pulpit and the pew. They all reject and make fun of the Word of God by their words and lifestyle, and by that action tell Christ that they do not want Him to rule over their lives.

There is not much mentioned about the "simple" in respect to judgment. We could possibly assume that their punishment in the outer darkness will be light as compared to others. The "fool", however, will suffer the promotion of *shame* and *stripes* in this place (Prov. 3:35; 19-29). The greatest punishment of the three, however, will be the "scorners" or apostates. They have a special place reserved for them called the "blackness of darkness" in the realm of Gehenna, where they will be assigned for one thousand years.

The Place of the Blackness of Darkness

Jude 11-13

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. ¹² These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; ¹³ Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

As we have mentioned before, the above Scripture from Jude does not speak of lost men, but rather apostate Christians (specifically apostate *teachers* in these last days). They have "gone in the way of Cain" (verse 11). This means that they began their fall from Christ by teaching that one could approach God with their *own* works instead of the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. This is what Cain did (offered the works of his hands and fruit of the cursed ground), instead of bringing a blood sacrifice as God commanded, and as Abel did.

Those who commit this gross error then rush to commit the next error – "The error Balaam for reward" (verse 11). Plainly and simply, this is the selling of their ministry for money. This is indicative of the spirit of many modern day ministries and great denominations. They emphasize numbers, money, large Churches, and television audiences. With few exceptions, this is the ministry of *entertainment* – a ministry which draws great sums of money for its leaders. It is also the ministry of the *great world Church* in Rome, which has become rich beyond measure by selling itself. God calls this Church, in its ultimate, final state during the Great Tribulation, the Great Whore (Rev. 17:1-2).

From the error of Balaam, they continued their fall until they "perished in the gainsaying of Core", or Korah (Num 16:1-32). The Greek word for "gainsaying" is "antilogia", which means "against the Word". Korah was a great man of the Levites. He was brought near to the Lord to serve in the tabernacle. However, he had higher ambitions. He wanted also to be the high priest and to take over Moses' and Aaron's God-given position (types of Christ). Thus, his contention with Moses indicated that he was "against the Word". He also caused 250 princes of Israel to fall with him as well as winning the sympathy of the entire congregation for a short period of time. This made him a type of all usurper teachers, who rebel from God's Word and attempt to take over the authority of Christ. As a result, the earth opened up and swallowed Korah and all of his company, and all who pertained to him, and they went down alive into the *pit* into the heart of the earth.

In this passage of Scripture, God shows us three major steps that lead downward into gross apostasy. The last step correlates with the fourth step, or fourth letter in Revelation 2:19-23. Historically speaking, the Thyatira Church is identified with the Roman Catholic Church, whose priests and popes are against the Word of God (they place their traditions and pronouncements of the Pope on equal level with God's Word). They have usurped the authority of Christ, and committed the sin of Korah. While God uses this Church to give to us a picture of the historical falling away of the Church, He also plainly tells us that its members, unless they trust in Christ's finished work at Calvary, are lost religionists.

Apostasy, then, means *falling away* from Christ. As we study the "blackness of darkness", keep one thing in mind. Apostates are not lost men. They will not be separated from God forever. They are the saved who have *rebelled* against God's Word and as a result will be separated to the "blackness of darkness" for a thousand years. In our above Scripture, God calls them "clouds without water" (a promise for blessing, but unable to deliver), "blown about by the wind" (drifters), "live autumn trees that produced no fruit in

two seasons who have been up-rooted" (turned against the Word); "wandering stars" (no orbit around another star, i.e. nothing to rule the course of their life) (verses 12, 13).

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Spirit, Soul and Body - After Death, Where Does Each Go?

Whenever we approach the subject of salvation, there is a matter of utmost importance that must be recognized, and that is the distinction in Scripture between the spirit, the soul, and the body. According to this Scripture, man is clearly portrayed as being composed of these three quite distinct elements:

1 Thessalonians 5:23

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This subject was covered extensively in Chapter Four, where I discussed in detail the necessity that each of these three parts must be saved before entrance is granted into the millennial reign. Also, I remind you of the "Keys of Three".

Because so many people equate spirit and soul – making man a dichotomous being (which is according to the theory of evolution) rather than a trichotomous being (which is according to the Scripture) – I think it would be well to set forth some additional teachings of the Bible pertaining to the threefold being of man.

In Gen. 1:26 the word translated God is Elohim, which is plural, and in Hebrew means three or more. In the following verses we have the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (Matt 28:19)

Matthew 3:13-17

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matt. 3:16-17)

There are ample other passages of Scripture which confirm the truth of the Trinity of the Godhead – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Since Elohim is a Trinity, for man to be created in the image and likeness of Elohim, he too must be a trinity. And since Jesus is Elohim manifest in the flesh, and since the whole Godhead dwells in Him bodily, and since Jesus was made in the likeness of His creature (however, apart from sin), then He, too, in His incarnation, must be a trinity, like man.

It is in 1Thes. 5:23 quoted above that the Spirit of God brings out the truth of man's threefold being – spirit, soul and body; also the fourth chapter of Hebrews makes this distinction.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow (the body), and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

We would naturally, therefore, expect spirit, soul and body in the Lord to be differentiated; and that is exactly what the Scripture teaches. When Jesus yielded up His Spirit on Calvary's cross, His (human) spirit went into heaven to God the Father.

Luke 23:46

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Please note a similar description at the time of the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:59:

Acts 7:59

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

Ecclesiastes also tells us that the spirit returns unto God who gave it.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Jesus' body went into the grave after His death on the Cross:

Matthew 27:59-60

And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

So, then, what became of the soul of Jesus upon His death?

Most commentaries lose it at this point when they discuss where the soul of Jesus went; most often, they make no distinction between His Soul and His Spirit (human). But Scripture tells us that at the time of the Lord's death, His soul went down into the restful part or the place of the redeemed in Sheol (Hebrew), or Hades (Greek) where the thief on the cross also went. (Lazarus and the rich man also went to Hades, although to different sections which were separated by a "great gulf").

Where the soul of Jesus went after death will be developed further in this section. But first I would also like to call your attention to the fact that in the temptation of our Lord (being tempted in all points like as we are) He was tempted in spirit, soul, and body. In Matt. 4:1-4, He was tempted in His body to turn stones into bread to satisfy bodily hunger. In verses 5-7 His soul was tempted to make a great display before man of His supernatural power by hurling Himself into space from the pinnacle of the temple (who among us has never dreamt of flying?). And in verses 8-10 He was tempted in His spirit to worship Satan rather than God.

Man, too, suffers from the threefold temptation to his spirit, soul, and body. In man's spirit he is God-conscious; in his soul he is self-conscious; in his body he is sense-conscious. Man is not a simple being, but a compound being of three constituent parts, spirit, soul and body; and Paul's prayer for each Christian was that he might in his entirety be sanctified in the day of the Lord (1Thess. 5:23).

SOUL OR SPIRIT - WHICH IS THE MAN?

The truth of Hades, and the truth of the intermediate state of the dead, has fallen into oblivion. This has caused enormous damage to the doctrine of the Millennium, - for who would wish to descend from the supernal Glory in Heaven to a millennial earth, after (in some cases) thousands of years supposedly in the immediate presence of God without a glorified body?

But even more drastically it *dislocates the truth of the resurrection*, which, for souls already with God, becomes as fantastic as it is unnecessary. It is (I hope) unnecessary to say that "Hades" and the "Lake of Fire" are totally separate localities. The Lake of Fire is never said to be in actual existence until *after* the Second Advent (Rev. 19: 20).

Death is not the sleep of the soul, nor is it an ascent into heaven; for the Lord said (*after* His resurrection): "I have not yet returned to the Father" (John 20: 17). The descent into Hades of all the redeemed of God until resurrection is here affirmed by our Saviour; for He passed through every human experience.

Ephesians 4:9

(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?)

And accordingly Christ descended with the Thief on the Cross into the underworld of the dead. How lovingly He answers, not the mouth of the Thief, but his heart! "Today" - not after two thousand years from now, as he perhaps unconsciously asks; today, before evening deepens into night, he shall be with Christ in God's garden of the soul - Paradise. Jesus was winning Paradise back, and so is able already to grant Paradise.

In view of the vast possibilities latent in a subject seldom adequately threshed out in the Church of Christ, it is obvious that the only wise attitude is a calm, reverent, prayerful, sane investigation. As treasures heavy and valuable may hang upon a small hook, so consequences weighty and far-reaching may follow the settlement of what may seem a small point.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

According to the above verse, at death the spirit of man returns to God who gave it. Because of this, it is generally thought and taught that man goes after death to God in heaven. If the passage meant this, it would teach that the ungodly, as well as the godly, go to heaven at death, for it refers to all mankind as "man". This alone shows that this is not the sense of the passage. But further, the meaning given assumes that the "man", the conscious entity, the person, the ego, is his spirit. But if this is not so, then the opinion stated has no support in Scripture.

Again, many annihilationists deem that the man, the person, consists of two parts only - the body and the spirit - and that when these are parted at death the person, the conscious ego, ceases to exist until the two parts are reunited in resurrection. But if the conscious personality has ceased to exist, it is extremely difficult to conceive that it is the identical conscious person that comes into existence again. Would it not rather be a new personality that comes into being at resurrection? How can continuity of personality persist during non-existence, and how, then, shall this new man be held morally responsible for the deeds of that former person, and be righteously liable to judgment therefore?

Moreover, this would involve (what indeed I have heard asserted) a disintegration of the person of the Man, Christ Jesus, between His death and resurrection. According to the theory, during that period His humanity was non-existent. So that while the Son of God existed, Christ did not until resurrection. This is fatal heresy, and alone forbids the doctrine in question.

The alternative must be for the annihilationist to adopt the first mentioned view - that the personality attaches to the spirit, as others of that school do. But if it be that the soul is the person, and that after death the soul has its own separate existence, then the whole assertion fails.

Because the most serious issues are involved here, this inquiry is of great practical importance. Indeed, it may be said that many most interesting and profitable themes can only be understood aright by a right understanding of our question: Soul or Spirit; which is the Man?

1. The Creation of Man

The creation of man is described in Gen 2:7-

Genesis 2:7

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Here are three stages:

1. A material form is fashioned out of material particles, dust. This is the body.

2. A something is inbreathed by God, named in Eccl 12. 7, "spirit." That the "breath" of Gen 2:7 and the "spirit" of Eccl 12. 7 are one is confirmed by the combination of the two terms in Gen 7:22: "All in whose nostrils was the *breath* of the *spirit* of life."

3. The result, that man became what is here called "soul," a living soul.

1). As to the body, please observe that it was not itself the man. *It* lay there, fashioned and prepared, but the *man* was not yet there. The body was an inanimate form, which preceded the existence of the man. This as against the Sadducean materialist and his assertion that the body is the man, and that when it dies his existence ends.

2). The same is true of the breath or spirit, which God inbreathed. It also was in existence prior to the man, for God breathed it into the body. It was not God; it is not divine: it is not said that God breathed of Himself, or breathed His Spirit into the body, but a something not to be defined by us as to its substance or nature, but which God terms "spirit."

Zechariah 12:1

The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

In the above verse it is declared to be a created thing, a thing "formed," as an article made by a potter. It is the same word as "potter" in Zech 11:13, and is found first at Gen 2:8: God "formed man." This as against the pantheist, and the doctrine akin to pantheism, that there is a measure of divinity in all men by creation. The immanence of God in all creation is truth; the identity of all things, or of any created thing, with God is error - deadly error.

Thus the spirit was not the man, for *he* only came into existence by reason of the inbreathing of the spirit into the body, which conjunction of two separate, previously existing things, resulted in the creation of a third: "man became a living soul."

3). It remains only that the man is what he is here described to be, "living soul." The man is the soul, not the spirit, even as he is not the body. This as against the annihilationist theory above mentioned.

This threefold composition of man is implied everywhere in the Word of God, and sometimes is distinctly stated.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The body is distinguished from the spirit in James 2. 26:

James 2:26

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

The soul is distinguished from the spirit in Heb 4. 12:

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The man has a body with which he operates within the material world; but the body is not the man. He has also a spirit with which he has dealings with the spiritual realm; but the spirit is not the man. The man himself, the conscious ego, is the soul. Personality in man is inherent in the soul, which will become yet more apparent as we proceed, but may be seen in such passages as Exo. 1:5: "all the souls... were seventy souls"; Lev. 4:2: "if a soul shall sin"; Lev. 5:2: "if a soul touch"; Lev. 5:4: "if a soul swear"; 7:18: "the soul that eateth"; etc, etc. The evident sense is: "If a *person*" do this or that.

2. The Meaning of the Word Death

Now "*the body without the spirit is dead*" (James 2:26), and the soul, the man, cannot use or inhabit a dead body. The spirit imparts to the body vitality, animation, and makes it usable by man. Thus so long

as the two are united, man is a living soul; but when God recalls the spirit which He gave, the body ceases to have life, the soul vacates it, and thenceforth, until resurrection, the man is dead.

But it is carefully and always to be remembered that in Scripture the term "life" does not mean simply existence, but much more; and much rather it means a certain mode or quality of existence; and equally so the term "death," therefore, does not mean *non*-existence, but an *opposite* state or mode of existence. Many things exist which do not exhibit the property called "life." All annihilationist reasoning which we have read assumes this false sense of the words "life" and "death" and cannot proceed without it.

Yet in some real sense Adam died the day he disobeyed God, according to the sentence, "*in the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt certainly die*" (Gen 2:17), but he did not cease to exist that day. So, by a powerful antithesis, it is said, "*she that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth*," which cannot be read, "ceases to exist" while she exists (1 Tim 5. 6). In much the same way we speak of a living death.

Equally arresting is our Lord's argument against the annihilationists of His day (Luke 20:37-38). He first admits that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dead, saying, "*But that the dead are raised*," and at once adds that "*God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him*." So dead in one sense, they are yet alive in another, showing that both terms describe only *relative* conditions of existence. Similarly the Lord makes the father of the prodigal say, "*This my son was dead, and is alive again*" (Luke 15:24), though in another sense he had been as much alive in the far country as after his return.

Further, it is clear that the first death does not cause the annihilation of the sinner or there could be no second death for him.

Thus the word death does not of itself mean ceasing to be, and such as say that the second death means annihilation are bound to show that the Scripture adds to the word this sense which does not belong to it. The second death is the "*lake of fire*" (Rev 20:14). The beast and the false prophet are cast thereinto before the thousand years reign; after such period Satan is cast there (Rev 20:10); so that a thousand years in the second death has not destroyed their existence, and the sentence upon all three is that "*they shall be tormented day and night for the ages of the ages*." It would be impossible to torment that which had ceased to be.

It is consistent with the holiness and the love of God - for it is fact - that angels that abused His favor have been confined in that place of misery, Tartarus, for thousands of years already (2 Pet 2:4); that Dives (Luke 16), who abused His goodness on earth, shall be *tormented* in a flame in Hades for a period unknown to us (for it is not yet ended); that the Beast and the false prophet, who blasphemed His holy name, shall be in the lake of fire for more than a thousand years at least. If this is consistent with the love and justice of God, why should it not be for 10,000 years, for 100,000, for a billion years, or for ever, and especially in the case of those who rejected His amazing love in Christ? We are not competent to form our own opinion as to what God may or may not do consistently with His character and because of it. We can only bow to what He has revealed, assured that He will ever act consistently with what He is, for He is not able to do otherwise. We can best estimate what sentence a judge may pass by considering what sentences he has passed before, as well as what statements he may have made as to future sentences.

3. What Takes Place At Death?

The passage aforementioned tells us that "*the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it*" (Eccl. 12:7). But what becomes of the *soul*?

An actual case is better than much speculation, an ounce of fact being worth a ton of theory. Of the Man Christ Jesus we are told distinctly what took place at His death.

1. His dead *body* was laid in the tomb.

2. His last words on the cross were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23. 46), the human spirit thus returning unto God who gave it. That the human spirit is not the divine Spirit is seen clearly in the case of our Lord, for His entire holy humanity was a created thing conceived by an operation of the Holy Spirit in Mary (Luke 1:35); years later it was anointed with power by the Spirit of God coming upon it; and at last, on the cross, He surrendered His *human* spirit to the Father, an act impossible in relation to the Spirit of God with Whom He as God was in indissoluble union. The distinction - necessary and unavoidable - between the human and the divine is thus ever maintained. It was the *human* spirit which vitalized His body that Jesus gave up in order that He might die physically as a man.

3. But the Spirit of prophecy in David (Psa. 16:10) had put into Messiah's mouth these other words: "*Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol,*" which words were later, on the day of Pentecost, applied by Peter to Christ: "*Thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades*" (Acts 2:27). And Christ's humanity, as ours, consisted of body, soul, and spirit.

Sheol and Hades are equivalent words in Hebrew and Greek respectively. Of this region there is abundant information in Scripture. It is very far from the fact, as spiritualists assert, that no certain information as to the state after death is available save what they think they receive from spirits through mediums. But unfortunately the reader of the Authorized Version is misled in this study by the variety of the terms employed. Sheol and Hades are rendered "grave," "pit," and "hell." The last in its older English meaning was not inaccurate, but it has come now to mean only the final place of the lost, the Lake of Fire, which never is the sense of Sheol or Hades.

4. Where Is Hades?

So the soul of our Lord was in Hades between His death and His resurrection on the third day. And Eph. 4:9-10, shows beyond question (1) that the "soul" was the Lord Himself, the personality, and (2) where Hades is situated. It says:

Ephesians 4:9-10

(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

(1) The Person that ascended is the same Person that had descended, and from His own express words to Mary directly after His resurrection it is certain that He Himself did not go to the Father (in heaven) at the hour of death, for He said to her:

John 20:17

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Because His ascent to the Father had yet to take place, it is clear that His human spirit, which He had commended to His Father as He died, was not Himself. Nor would the words admit the thought; for a man cannot send his personality, his self, away from himself, but we read of Jesus that "he gave up the spirit," or, *breathed out* the spirit, expired, as we say, the exact reversal of the act of creation when God *breathes* in the spirit.

The spirit therefore was not Himself, but a part of His composite humanity that He could dismiss by an act of the will. Man does not possess the power to do this; he must use violence to terminate his life: but Christ had received this power specially from His Father, according to His statement that the Father had given Him authority to lay down His life by His own act (John 10:17-18).

(2) The realm to which Christ descended (elsewhere, as we have seen, named Hades) is in this place in Ephesians stated plainly to be in "the lower parts of the earth." Scripture always locates it there and nowhere else. So Jacob of old said: "*I will go down to Sheol to my son*" (Gen. 37:35); and so the great prophet Samuel, when permitted by God to come from the world of the dead to announce the doom of Saul (an exceptional permission and event) said: "*Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?*" (1 Sam. 28:15). And so Christ said of Capernaum: "Shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go *down* unto Hades" (Matt. 11:23). As certainly as heaven is above the surface of the earth, so certainly is Hades in the opposite direction.

Readers of the great classics will not need to be reminded that it was the common belief of the ancient world that the place of the dead was within the earth. We are not aware that any other opinion was then in men's minds. Their details of that place and its conditions are not to be accepted without scriptural confirmation, even as those of medieval writers like Dante are not to be; but the general facts of the location of the world of the dead within the earth, and of its having two divided regions, one of pain and one of bliss, are plainly adopted in Holy Scripture (as in Luke 16), and so are confirmed as facts.

And it could be shown that some details also are thus confirmed; as that the poets made visitors to and from that realm go and come through some cave or opening in the earth, and the Revelation similarly represents demon hordes as coming from the abyss through a shaft or opening therefrom (Rev. 9:1-11). We take the idea in each case to represent the conception that the realm of the dead is within the earth.

5. But Do Not Saints At Death "Go to Heaven"?

The death of Stephen presents the exact features seen at the death of his Lord. We are told that:

Acts 7:59-60

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

His body did not fall asleep: it was battered to death by brutal stoning, and devout men buried it. It does not say that his spirit fell asleep, but that he surrendered it to his Lord. We shall see later that neither does the soul "sleep" in relation to that other realm to which it goes at death; so that the expression "fell asleep" can only mean as to its relation to this earth-life which it leaves at death.

But did not Stephen "go to heaven" when he died? Do not all who die in Christ do so? This has been the almost universal belief of Protestants, but there is no basis in Scripture in support of it. If Solomon's words, "the spirit returns to God who gave it," mean this, that the *saints* before the time of Christ must have gone there, then, as before remarked, it would not mean saints only, but the ungodly also, for the statement applies to all men.

It has been often asserted that when the Lord rose he released from Hades the godly dead and removed them to Paradise in the presence of God, and that ever since all His people go there at death. The Scripture nowhere declares this, but is wholly against it.

The question should be asked, *Where* were these multitudes of souls during the forty days before Christ himself ascended: raised at His resurrection, as the theory asserts, what was their location during that period?

But we know definitely that one of the most renowned of Old Testament men of God did *not* ascend to heaven with the Lord, for at Pentecost, which was after the ascension, Peter distinctly stated that "*David has not ascended into the heavens*" (Acts 2:34). Why was David left behind? There is no reason to think he was: the other godly dead also stayed there, as far as Scripture is concerned.

Alford translates: "David himself [i.e., in contrast to Christ] is not ascended": Whitby: "David is not (yet) ascended": Canon Cook (Speaker's Commentary) remarks: "David's soul was still in the intermediate state." Had David in fact ascended even but a few weeks before Peter was speaking, the latter could not have made the assertion "David ascended not." The aorist used (*anabee*) covered all preceding time, from the death of David to the speech of Peter. Moreover, if at *any* time David had ascended, the point and conclusiveness of Peter's argument were gone. Its cogency lay in the fact that *no one* but Jesus Christ had ascended: therefore He and He alone fulfilled the prophecy; for if *any one* else had ascended from the grave to the throne of God how should it be certain that *that* person did not fulfil the prediction?

In his great work on *The Creed* (Art 5. *He descended into Hell*) Bishop Pearson shows how little basis the opinion in question has. He says:

"The next consideration is whether by virtue of His descent, the souls of those who before believed in Him, the Patriarchs, Prophets, and all the people of God, were delivered from that place and state, in which they were before; and whether Christ *descended into Hell* to that end, that He might translate them into a place and state, far more glorious and happy. This has been, in the later ages of the Church, the vulgar opinion of most men...

But even this opinion, as general as it hath been, hath neither the consent of Antiquity, nor such certainty as it pretendeth. Indeed, very few (if any) for above five hundred years after Christ, did so believe that Christ delivered the saints out of Hell, as to leave all the damned there. Many of the Ancients believed not, that they were removed at all, and few acknowledged that they were removed alone."

But you may ask, "What became of those who came forth from their graves after Christ had risen and who appeared unto many"? (Matt. 27:52-53). Did they not "go to heaven" with the Lord? Let those say what became of these to whom God may have given private information upon the point; but it cannot be learned from Scripture that they went to heaven. And in return you may ask, "What became of Lazarus and the other persons who were resuscitated, as mentioned in Scripture? Did they go to heaven without

dying again? Or, are they still on earth? Or, did they not in due time go back to the death state, from which they had been temporarily recalled to exhibit the power of God"?

Generally, the following verse is advanced to prove that Christ lead all saints from Hades:

Ephesians 4:8

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

It is commonly held that this verse teaches that when Christ ascended to the Father, He led captivity captive - meaning the captive saints of Sheol were loosed from their bondage, and ever since have (and do) dwell in heaven with the Lord. There is no doubt that in isolation this text can be made to say this; but if it is to read harmoniously with the rest of the scriptures then it cannot mean what has been stated above. The expression "led captivity captive" is used twice in the Old Testament. The first occurs in Judges 5:12, and is the cry of Deborah to Barak who had returned victorious from a battle with Sisera. She was instructing him as the victorious commander to lead forth in a victory parade in which he would go in front of his chained ENEMY CAPTIVES. Deborah certainly did not mean that he was to gather his own soldiers who may have been prisoners of Sisera and whom had been released at victory.

The second mention is found in Psalm 68:18, and it has the same thought. The Psalm records a military operation - when God arises His enemies are dispersed and those that hate Him flee. Then after a mighty victory, we read in verse 18,

Psalms 68:18

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

I ask a simple straightforward question at this point: did Paul, when he quoted this verse from Psalm 68, mean to reverse the interpretation from the original? This reversal of the meaning seems to us more like the work of man - especially in the light of Colossians 2:15

Colossians 2:15

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Here Paul distinctly tells us that Christ, having spoiled (gained the victory) over principalities and powers, made a show of them openly (a public spectacle) in which He triumphed over them in it. These then are the captives which the Lord led forth in triumph, and this harmonizes with the tenor of Scripture rather than clashing even to the point of contradiction.

Further, if the general interpretation of Ephesians 4:8 is correct, can it be explained why, when these captive saints were led out of sheol and into heaven, was king David left behind? Peter, speaking under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in Acts 2:29, 34, concerning David says,

Acts 2:29-34

29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

The time factor is very important here, for Peter speaks on the Day of Pentecost which was ten days AFTER the Lord ascended into heaven. We are told by those who see in Ephesians 4:8 the saints being led aloft, that sheol - or at least that part called Abraham's bosom and Paradise - is now empty; but how can this be so if even one saint were left behind - and most certainly if David is still there?

Therefore the conception that since the Ascension redeemed souls in dying wing their way up to the Throne of God is quite untrue. Thus the comfort Jesus gives to John thirty to forty years after the Ascension, when the Apostle falls at His feet 'as one dead,' is - "I hold the keys of Death and of Hades" (Rev. 1:18), Hades thus being no more emptied than Abaddon, but both being now in the direct, personal custody and control of Christ.

Perhaps we could say in another sense that the Lord has "led captivity captive", this being that He has enslaved the underworld, dying "that he might become Lord of both the dead and the living" (Rom. 14:9); and the 'captives' that graced His train (if there were any) were the Powers of Darkness that sought to arrest the ascending Lord (Col. 2: 15).

Romans 14:9

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

On another hand, then, you might object that Paul in Philippians 1:23 had a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better - does not this carry the import that the saint goes to heaven at death? To isolate this verse on its own, it could be made to say so; but I do not believe that it does - this is reading into it what one WANTS to see there. I have shown that it is GAIN for the saint to die, and he who is living in the fullness of the Lord actually looks forward to "being with Christ" but whether he wants to believe it or not, he will go to that "home" spoken of by Job (30:23) and Paul (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Job 30:23

For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house [home] appointed for all living.

2 Corinthians 5:8

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present [home] with the Lord.

These saints are not tucked away in a corner and forgotten about until the resurrection - no, far from it, for they are alive unto God (Luke 20:38) and can commune with the Lord (Revelation 6:9-11). They - being unhindered with the body of sin and being (as to their nature) non-corporeal - can appreciate the presence of the Lord to a degree far beyond that which we can comprehend. This is the thought behind the words of Philippians 1:6, where the good work of Christ CONTINUES in the believer until the day of Christ, which will be the day of his perfection. Let us acknowledge that even in this body of sin, we can still

appreciate to some degree the presence of the Lord - for has He not promised this to His people (Matthew 18:20)?

If we had read further in Ephesians 4 and had gone to verse 10, we would have had the answer concerning the presence of the Lord. There we read, "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens THAT HE MIGHT FILL ALL THINGS." That is, that He might fill the universe with His presence; and, must not this be so for the fulfillment of Matthew 18:20?

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

The Psalmist had this thought in mind when he wrote, "*Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.*" No matter where the saint goes in life or death, he is assured of the presence of the Lord.

Let us not forget the circumstances in which Paul wrote the words of Philippians 1:23. He was languishing in prison, chained night and day to a Roman soldier, and the treatment of prisoners in those days left a lot to be desired. Remember also that he was now an old man with a hard physical life behind him (2 Corinthians 11:23-29). Under such circumstances can we be surprised that he yearned to be with Christ which is far better? But, let us be honest, does Paul say WHERE he is going in order to be with Christ? If we say "heaven" then we are reading into the Scriptures something that we ASSUME to be there, and this can be a dangerous course in the study of the Word of God. I say then that there is insufficient evidence in these words of Paul to substantiate a premise that his departure would mean his going to heaven.

What is probably the final and most important objection is found in Paul's words of 2 Corinthians 12:1-14. He speaks of an experience which doubtless he had himself, although, whether it was himself or someone else is immaterial. The fact of the matter was that he was caught away to the "third heaven" (verse 2) and caught away to Paradise (verse 4). It is generally believed that this is one vision and that the "third heaven" is Paradise. This is generally believed because of three points. First, one wants to believe it because it is attractive and helps bear out some other "general beliefs." Second, because of an inaccurate reading of the scripture. And third, because of the little unauthorized word "up" being inserted in the English text.

If we read the text aright, we see that Paul speaks of visions and revelations (plural), so we must expect him to speak of more than one experience, and when we continue to read we see that he does. It says in our version that he was "caught up" to the third heaven - it does not say so in the Greek. The word rendered "Caught up" is *HARPAZO* and literally means to "catch away" BUT DOES NOT CONVEY THE SENSE OF DIRECTION. This can only be gained by adding the appropriate word and thus indicating direction. The translators in this case have added "up" and, no doubt, rightly. There are far too many references in scripture as to the direction of heaven to cause doubt on this point.

But when we come to the *second* experience, we see that they assume it was the same one he had already spoken of, and again they add the word "up." This however, is quite wrong; for nowhere in scripture do we get the impression that "paradise" is up in heaven. (The word is mentioned three times in the New Testament: Luke 23:43; Revelation 2:7; and in our text).

6. When and Where Is Paradise?

Paradise is not the actual dwelling place of God, the house or temple in heaven. The meaning of the word will not allow this, for it describes the pleasure grounds of a great man, perhaps a king. Thus Solomon using the word says:

Ecclesiastes 2:4-5

I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, [paradises] and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

The parks were not the houses. The former, like the vineyards, might be at a distance from the palace. In the Septuagint (LXX) the word is used of the Garden of Eden.

Paul says that he was "caught away into the paradise" (2 Cor. 12. 4), which, in view of the meaning of the word, does not mean the heaven of heavens where God has His own especial dwelling. The word "caught up" is not exact, for the Greek word *harpazo* does not in itself indicate the direction. Nor is it certain that by "the paradise" he means the "third heaven" to which he had been taken according to the verse preceding, because he had said (vs. 1) that he was about to speak of "visions," not of only one vision, whereas he did not mention more than one, unless the two are separate events.

But *if* the article "the paradise" points to one such region that is pre-eminently Paradise, and *if* that is in the upper world, what follows? Nothing, as to our theme; certainly not that all saints go thither at death. Paul is using the experience as proof that he had exceptional tokens that he was an apostle, which requires that the experience itself be exceptional, not general. Moreover, that an unusual event happened to one Christian during life is no proof that it happens to all Christians at death.

But the article "the paradise" does not require the sense of a region in the heavens, because Christ used it when he said to the thief. "*To-day shalt thou be with me in the paradise*" (Luke 23.43), and it is beyond question, as we have seen that Christ did not go to the heavenly regions that day, but to Hades, in "*the lower parts of the earth*." Therefore the blissful region of Hades - "*Abraham's bosom*" (Luke 16:22) - was paradise: and ought not we, the followers of the Lord, to feel that a region which was suitable to Him in the death state must be fully suitable for us?

As far as the meaning of the word goes there may be *many* paradises, even as Solomon says, "I made my paradises"; and so it may be that "the paradise of God," where grows the tree of life of which saints that have conquered in the battles of life shall be privileged to eat, is heavenly in location (Rev, 2:7, 22, 14); but in any case that is future, not present, as to our enjoyment of it, and does not concern the place and state of the dead.

The Lord Jesus in His universal presence is not only in heaven; He is also in the midst of two or three living saints gathered to His name on earth. He is in Hades also: "He descended... He ascended, that He might fill all things" might occupy the universe (*ta panta*), might pervade it all with His presence, as the odor of the ointment did the house (John 12:3), where the same verb is used as in Eph. 4:10 (*pleeroo*). Thus, without vacating His place at the right hand of God, He could present Himself personally and repeatedly to His imprisoned and hard-pressed servant on earth (Acts 23:11; 2Tim 4:16-17), and can also communicate with the dead, as we shall see shortly.

And the soul, freed from the trammels of this enfeebled, deranged body of our humiliation, can in consequence appreciate that presence more keenly and enjoy it more blessedly, and so Paul could rightly say that to depart and to be with Christ would be very far better than to be chained day and night to a rough pagan soldier, as was at that time his distressing lot (Phil. 1:23). It is however to be noted that the apostle does not here make any general statement that *"to die is gain"*; strictly his assertion is made of himself only. He had just stated his *"earnest expectation and hope"* that Christ should continue to be *"magnified in his body, whether by life or by death."* Not every believer lives with this as his fixed and paramount intention. Not every Christian has so dedicated his body to Christ as to be as willing for death as for life. Then Paul adds: *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Phil 1. 20, 21). Doubtless this is true of each of us who lives to magnify Christ; but it is not said of believers who may *not* so live, as those, for example, who are cut off prematurely in their sins, as were Ananias and Sapphira and the evil, living Christians in the Corinthian church (Acts 5:1; 1Cor 11:30).

7. The Souls Under the Altar

It is a serious loss to many believers that they regard the book of the Revelation as beyond comprehension, and are afraid to accept its symbols and visions as a *revelation*, and not a mystery that cannot be unraveled with any confidence. Hence, when appeal is made to it, they decline to accept its testimony. But symbols, pictures, figures of speech, being used by the Spirit of truth with divine care, teach with accuracy and indeed with superior vividness, those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Hieroglyphs have plain meaning to those who can read them, and this had been just as much the fact during the period when men could not read them, or in the later period when scholars differed as to their meaning. Patient research brought explanation and reconciliation.

One of the most illuminating portions of Scripture upon our present interesting and necessary themes is in Revelation 6:9-11. John says:

Revelation 6:9-11

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

At the time here in view the resurrection of these godly martyrs has not yet come, for the role of the martyrs is not complete. These brethren therefore are still without their resurrection bodies. But to John, rapt in spirit into the super-celestial world (Rev. 1:10: *"I became in spirit,"* that is, in an ecstatic state), those "souls" were visible. Therefore death does not end the existence of the *soul*. Moreover, they are conscious: they remember what befell them on earth at the hands of the godless; they know what the future will bring of vengeance; they ponder the situation, and they wonder at the seeming delay of their vindication of God; they appeal to their Lord; they are given answer, counsel, and encouragement; they receive the sign of their Master's approval, the white robe, at once His recompense for that they did not defile their garments in the foul world, and His assurance that they shall be His personal and constant associates in His kingdom (Rev 3. 4, 5).

The vision contains also something more, and which is completely unseen by most readers. When Samuel come from Hades to speak to Saul (1Sam. 28:12-14) he was *seen* by the medium. She saw him *"coming*

up out of the earth," a further plain intimation that Sheol is within the earth. She described him, saying it was *"an old man"* who had appeared, and he was *"covered with a robe."* The description was so accurate that Saul, who had long known Samuel on earth, recognized him by it and was satisfied that the real Samuel was present, though he had not himself seen the appearance; for it says that *"he perceived (Heb, knew),"* not that he *saw* that it was Samuel. Equally his question to the witch *"What seest thou?"* tells that he had not himself seen the form.

This makes evident (a) that the disembodied soul has form and garments, such as can be seen by one endowed with the necessary vision therefor, as were the medium then and John later; and (b) that the psychical form and clothing of that state correspond recognizably to the outer material form and clothing of the former earth life. This has bearing upon the question of recognition after death, and upon other interesting points not now to be examined.

The reality of this psychical form is often assumed or asserted in Scripture. Dives in Hades (Luke 16) has a body that can feel anguish from a *"flame."* There is *"water"* that could cool his *"tongue."* Lazarus has a *"finger."* Both Dives and Abraham have eyes and ears and voices; they see and hear and speak. The reality of bliss in that state must be surrendered if the reality of torment there be denied. That those realities are subtle as compared with their grosser counterparts of this world, does not make them or the experiences less real, but rather the more acute.

Thus also it is as to the souls *"under the altar."* John sees them, and sees that to each of them is given a "robe" that is both suitable and significant. It was for a similar, yet even higher, experience that Paul longed; for, while the disembodied state would indeed be far better than his painful lot as a prisoner, yet in itself it is not the best. And so on another occasion, when he was in freedom and rejoicing in his wondrous and privileged service, he spoke differently (2 Cor. 5:1-10). First he spoke of the present: *"We that are in this tent-dwelling [the body] do groan, being burdened"*: then he mentioned the intermediate state after death: *"not for that we would be unclothed"* (without adequate covering), for this is not to be desired; it is as unpleasant and unseemly for the soul as for the body; and then he spoke of the future: *"we long to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked,"** that is, at the coming of the Lord.

[* Compare the evident longing of the evil spirit to return into the body he had left. Without a material body he wandered restless, like a thirsty man seeking water in a desert (Matt 12:43-45). Demons also begged to enter the bodies of even swine, when driven from the body of a man. This misery of disembodied beings is recognized by the heathen, who often, by reason of dread and unholy contact with the demon world, have more sense of these matters than the materialized modern westerner. Thus a Chinese driver explained the whirling dust spouts of the Gobi desert as being spirits: "What they want is a body, and for lack of a better one they pick up a shroud of sand".

This *"if so be"* implies the possibility of not having part in the first resurrection, for (1Cor. 15:54) that is the hour when *"what is mortal shall be swallowed up of life,"* by the soul being clothed upon with its *"building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens,"* a "house" in contrast to this present body, the frail transitory tent.

This is the meaning of his earlier prayer above noticed, that "the spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, unblemished," and so unblameable (*amemptos* includes both) when the Lord shall come (1 Thess. 5:2). No "naked," that is, unembodied, soul can be presented before the presence of God's glory, because for that it must be without blemish (*amomos*), not to be blamed (Jude 24: Eph. 1:4). Were a man,

however perfect his form, and even were he of the royal family, to present himself naked on a court day before a king upon his throne he would be severely blamed. Not only comeliness of person, but clothing, and suitable clothing is indispensable. Indeed, the officers of the court would prevent anything so utterly unseemly. Shall the King of kings receive less respect? He that hath ears to hear let him hear this, and lay to heart that not death, but resurrection qualifies a man fit for translation to the realms above and the court of the God of glory. It was thus with Christ himself.

For entrance into the holy places the priest had not only to be one of the redeemed people of God; he had also to be unblemished as to his person (Lev. 21), and he had further to be clothed in garments of glory and beauty (Exo. 28). Both were indispensable for access to the presence of God. Moreover, before the perfect form could be clothed in such garments it had to be washed with water (Lev. 8:6; 16:4), which is the work our Moses – Christ - wishes to affect in us in this earthly life by His word (Eph. 5:25-27) and by discipline (Heb. 12:10), in preparation for that coming day of our being clothed for access to and service in the true sanctuary above.

If it be asked whether the righteousness imputed to the believer upon first faith in Christ does not include all this that is evidently necessary, the answer is a distinct negative. One consideration settles this. That imputed righteousness is the "righteousness of God," and this is of necessity indefectible, untarnishable. But, according to the regulations, the priest may possibly be defective in form or defiled in person and clothing: were it not so, what need of the regulations and purifying ceremonies?

For the forgiveness of sins, and for life as a forgiven man *in the camp*, neither perfection of form, nor washing at the gate of the tabernacle, nor special clothing, were demanded; but for access of God and for priestly service all these were as indispensable as the atoning blood. Imputed righteousness settles completely and for ever the judicial standing of the believer as justified before the law of God; but practical righteousness must be added in order to secure many of the mighty privileges which become possible to the justified. Let him that hath ears hear this also, for loss and shame must be his at last who has been content to remain deformed and imperfect in moral state, or is found to have neglected the washing, and so to be unfit to wear the noble clothing required for access to the throne of glory. Such neglect of present grace not only causes the loss of heart access to God, as the careless believer surely knows, but will assure the forfeiture of much that grace would have granted in the future.

Here lies the weight of the warning which our Lord announces from heaven as to be specially applicable when His coming draws near: "*Behold, I come as a thief.* [This message is set in the midst of the gathering of the hosts of Antichrist for the battle of Armageddon, and so indicates the period when the coming will be]. *Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame*" (Rev 16:15). Therefore "garments" may be lost. If the reference is to the imputed righteousness, then justification may be forfeited, and the once saved be afterwards lost. But let those who rightly reject this, inquire honestly what it does properly mean as to the eternally justified. And let them face what is involved in the loss of one's garments.

In the temple of old the guards were placed at nightfall at their posts. The captain of the temple, at any hour he chose, went round with a posse of men unannounced, and if a guard was caught asleep at his post, he was stripped of his clothes, which were burned, and he was left to go forth in his shame. The shame of his nakedness was the outward counterpart of the deeper shame that he had slept when on duty. Not in that dishonored state would he dare to enter the house of God and sing or serve. And it would be a long time before the disgrace of that night would fade from memory: his own or others. My soul, keep awake through this short night of duty while thy Lord is away! Thou knowest not in which watch of the night He

will come, and it would be dreadful to be left unclothed with that house which is from heaven should He come suddenly and find thee sleeping!

To return to the 5th seal, then, these are "souls", not "spirits." Man has spirit as part of his composite being, but he is not a spirit, as angels are. In the 397 places where the word "spirit" comes in the New Testament man is never called a spirit, because he *himself* is not one, but is a soul. Accordingly, by the way, the "spirits in prison" of 1 Pet 3:19 are *not* human beings, but those fallen angels whom Peter again mentions (2 Pet. 2:4; comp. Gen. 6:1-4 and Jude 6). This is put beyond question by the fact that these are in the underworld, in prison, in Tartarus - a region well known to the ancient world, and by this name that Peter uses, as the deepest and most dreadful part of Hades, a prison of fallen angels; whereas the *spirit* of *man* does not go to the underworld, but to "God who gave it."

It is therefore the soul which is the person; and – as opposed to the annihilationist - the soul has not ceased to exist, or lost its sense of personality, because of being without spirit or body. Yet neither can man in this incomplete condition stand in the all-holy presence of God in heaven. For entrance into the Holy of Holies the High Priest himself must be arrayed in garments specially pure and glorious. It was only in His resurrection body of glory that the Man Christ Jesus entered into the holy place on high, and so only can the under-priests, His followers, do so. Hence the verse,

1 Corinthians 15:50

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

No; in order to "inherit the Kingdom of God" (a term synonymous with the First Resurrection), we must be clothed with our glorious body of flesh and spirit, like unto the body of our Lord. To stand there the being must be complete in structure and perfect morally, which is the point of Paul's prayer for fellow-saints: *"The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, blameless in the parousia [the presence, at His coming] of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1Thess 5:23). This shows that the phrase "the spirits of just men made perfect" points to spirits awaiting the resurrection. It has just before been said of them, that *"apart from us they could not be made perfect"* (Heb. 12:23; 11:40). All the other glories to which in this passage we are said to have come are future, to be realized actually at the coming of the Lord.

Now these souls that John saw are "under the altar." Not one of the first six seals, of which this is the fifth, pictures events in the presence of God in heaven; all deal with affairs on earth, or as seen from the earth. This altar then, is not in heaven. There is an altar in heaven pictured in the book, but it is specified as being the *"golden altar,"* that is, the one for incense (comp. Exo. 30:3), and as being *"before the throne"* or *"before God"* (Rev. 8:3; 9. 13). In this book *"before the throne"* always means the upper heavens. But this other altar is one of sacrifice (though not of *atoning* sacrifice). We Christians have an altar of atoning sacrifice (Heb. 13:10); it is the cross of Jesus, the Lamb of God. But that is not in view here.

The picture is really quite simple. The brazen altar of sacrifice in the tabernacle was square and hollow, with a grating upon which rested the wood and the victims. When the fire had done its work, the remains of the sacrifice fell through the grating to beneath the altar, whence they could be removed on occasion. Now the place, the "altar," where these martyrs of Christ sacrificed person and life in His cause is obviously this earth, and thus this vision simply declares what we have seen from other scriptures, that the

place of the dead is under the earth: "He descended into the lower parts of the earth"; whence those still there will be removed at resurrection.

The altar (Rev. 6:9) is the earth: the brazen altar of burnt-offering and the golden altar of incense in the Tabernacle correspond to *earth* and *heaven* respectively. The *souls under the altar*, therefore, are in Hades, in the saved department thereof - which is remote from pains and fires.

A great deal more concerning Hades can be learned from Scripture, but it would require separate treatment. Here we deal with the matter only as connected with the subject in hand.

It is true, as above indicated in Heb. 12:23, that the words soul and spirit take, by much usage, shades of meaning derived from their primary sense. The student will discover these, and will not be confused thereby if only the primary, dominant sense of each has been first grasped firmly. And keeping that sense before him, we believe he will find it to illuminate many obscure scriptures and subjects to see that the *soul* is the person - a living soul while on earth - an unclothed soul while in the underworld - and to be made alive in immortality at the resurrection, with a body of glory incorruptible, indestructible.

The term "immortal soul" is incorrect and misleading when used of our present state or of the dead. To be immortal is to be incapable of dying. Man is not this as yet. Neither the innocent humanity of Adam, nor ever the sinless humanity of Jesus was immortal, for both were capable of dying, and did in fact die. But the saved of men will become immortal in resurrection, just as the man Christ Jesus did. The soul, the man, has now *endless existence* but not immortality, in the proper sense of the word, until resurrection; and then only the saved will be incapable of dying; the lost will exist for ever, but in a state termed "dead," (the "second death.")

Only one Man is presently in an immortal, resurrection body, and that Person is the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 6:16

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

We rightly describe death as a "dissolution," for the partnership between man's spirit and soul and body is dissolved. Of our Lord in resurrection we read the glorious fact that "*He liveth in the power of indissoluble life*" and "*death no more hath dominion over Him*" (Heb. 7:16; Rom. 6:9-10). This life His people will share for ever and ever. But for them, as for Him, it can be reached only by resurrection, never by death.

It will be no small profit from this discussion if it be seen that the opinion that the believer goes at death to glory diminishes the sense of need of resurrection, and consequently of the return of Christ when this event will take place; and also if it thus cause some hearts to feel that these events are utterly indispensable - the proper and blessed hope of the believer. As Peter exhorts, let us "*set our hope perfectly [that is, undividedly] on the favour that is being brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (1Pet. 1:13).

They Without Us Should Not Be Made Perfect

The Old Testament saints also are waiting to "*be made perfect*" at same general time as the overcoming Christians.

Hebrews 11:40

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Therefore, the souls of all the departed saints, from Abel through today, are still located in the saved side of Hades, referred to in Luke 16 as Abraham's Bosom. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still there. So are the souls of the Apostles. All are awaiting the resurrection of the just, when, like Jesus, their spirits, souls, and bodies will be reunited at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But this resurrection at that point will only be for those whose souls are judicially determined to be qualified at the Judgment Seat. The rest, which are the vast majority (*many are called, but few are chosen*) must await the second (last) resurrection at the end of the millennium to receive their glorified bodies.

You may ask, to what purpose is this extended delay before the Old Testament Saints are granted their full reward? It lies in the purpose of God to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10), that is, to bring all things together under one Head at one and the same time. And that time is not yet, for beyond the purpose that concerned those saints of pre-Christian ages there lay the further purpose to gather out from all races a new company, the church of God. Those cited in the "Faith Hall of Fame" were almost all Hebrews, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Rahab being the four exceptions named.

These were indeed enough instances to show that the plan of God included the blessing of all the families of earth, according to the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:3). When the epistle of Hebrews was written that plan was being expanded and the body of Christ was being gathered from all nations, and included Paul and his readers. It was not possible that "*they* apart from *us*" should be made perfect. And still this outgathering goes on, and will do so until the day of Christ; and therefore the godly dead must yet await for their perfecting until all is ready for Christ to be all in all.

What, in the sense of this passage, does it mean to be perfected? The Son of God tells us. Walking as a man in humiliation on earth He told some to tell a wicked king, "*Behold I cast out demons and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected.*" This is a prophetic reference to the day He would rise from the dead in His glorious, resurrection body.

Paul also mentions being perfected in this context:

Philippians 3:11-12

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Although the price for our redemption was fully paid on the Cross, it was not the shameful death of Jesus that was a *perfecting*. The death state is an imperfect condition, because the soul (the ego) is destitute of both spirit and body. Perfection consists in the rejoining of soul and spirit in a heavenly house - a body of resurrection glory. It was the restoration to Him of His original divine glory that was Christ's perfecting, and this took place by resurrection and ascension to the Father.

It is thus, and only thus, that the people of Christ can be perfected. In the death state they too are imperfect, unclothed, a soul without a body, a state Paul did not desire (2Cor. 5:4). For himself and his fellow-believers he longed for that house, that body of glory, which is from God, from heaven; and that is

granted only by out-resurrection, and these await the descent of the Lord from heaven in His day (1Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Therefore Paul prayed thus: *"And the God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame unto the coming [parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thess. 5:23). The saved dead are not entire, but incomplete, and must remain so until the coming of the Lord.

The passage in Hebrews 11 was written long after the ascension of Christ. It tells us that the saints of former days were still not perfect. They were disembodied, without that resurrection form and nature which alone empowers a human being to leave the world of the dead and present itself in the presence of the glory of God. Without that body of glory man could not endure that Divine light, nor could a naked soul be permitted in that perfect realm and glory. The resurrection from the dead into glorified bodies is imperative.

Moreover, consider this very relevant verse:

John 14:2-3

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Jesus promises to come again, and receive you unto Himself. The Greek word for "receive", *paralambano*, is the same word used for "the one shall be *taken*, the other left". This promise is yet future; it has surely not been fulfilled to date. Therefore, "that where I am, there ye may be also" is yet future. The Christian who has died may be said to be "in His presence" spiritually in Hades; but to be in His physical presence is yet future.

So, then, what is the conclusion of the matter proposed by the question of the title of this chapter: Where are the spirit, soul, and body of believers who have died?

The body is in the grave, returning to the dust from which it came.

The spirit has returned to God who gave it.

The soul is in Paradise, under the earth, in the saved side of Hades referred to in Luke 16 as Abraham's Bosom. It is currently in the spiritual "presence" of the Lord: a hugely blissful state.

2 Corinthians 5:8

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

This Greek verb, "to be present", or "to be at home", is used only three times in the New Testament; all three times are in this passage. So we are presently "at home" in our physical bodies; when we die, we will go to a temporary home in the saved side of Hades; and at the Resurrection, we shall go to our new home in the heavenlies where we shall be physically present with the Lord.

These three separate constituent parts will be joined together at the Resurrection, never to die again. Only Jesus Christ presently possesses a resurrected, glorified body.

1 Timothy 6:16

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

No other man can approach unto this light until he has received his immortal, resurrected body.

Therefore in conclusion, the conception that since the Ascension of Christ redeemed souls in dying wing their way up to the Throne of God in heaven is quite untrue. Thus the comfort Jesus gives to John thirty to forty years after the Ascension, when the Apostle falls at His feet "*as one dead*," is - "*I hold the keys of Death and of Hades*" (Rev. 1:18), the saved side of Hades thus being no more emptied than the lost side (sometimes referred to as Abaddon), but both are now in the direct, personal custody and control of Christ. Perhaps we might say our Lord has "*led captivity captive*" (Eph. 4:8) - He has enslaved the underworld, dying "*that he might become Lord of both the dead and the living*" (Rom. 14:9); and the 'captives' that graced His train (if there were any) were the Powers of Darkness that sought to arrest the ascending Lord (Col. 2:15).

Romans 14:9

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Depart From Me, Ye That Work Iniquity

"The Holy Spirit often dwells in sanctifying power where He does not dwell as an illuminating power in the deep things of God, and time embalms the errors it does not destroy, and creeds are propagated from father to son." (Nathaniel West.)

"Nevertheless, as Cato the Censor said, That the Romans were like sheep, for that a man were better drive a flock of them, than one of them; for in a flock if you could get some few go right the rest would follow." (Bacon.)

Will the "old bottles" of the traditional theology hold the new wine generated by the operation of the Holy Spirit working in and through the "new things" brought forth from the inexhaustible treasury of the Word of God? They could not when the Son of Man taught on earth, nor can they today. But in spite of this fact Luke was able to marshal in stately array his "many infallible proofs", and it is very probable that Theophilus was able to drink deeply from this new well of salvation.

It is not easy for religious people to accept and appreciate the flavor of the "new wine" when they have long been accustomed to the old wine of traditionalism. They still say, "The old is better". Viewed historically, it seems to have been vastly easier and much more congenial to religious people to fight sanctifying truth than to oppose and expose the consecrated conventionalities of sanctified error (traditions of men).

So far as we have gone in the chapters already covered we have come to some very important conclusions (whatever the reader may think as to their truth or error in relation to the tremendous subject of Biblical eschatology, and in refutation of traditional theories.)

But one object in what has already been written is to prepare the way for a different interpretation of a well-known portion of God's word; and for a still more astonishing conclusion based on said passages. The reader's intellectual, moral and spiritual resources may be severely taxed in this chapter. But at the same time it is equally true that in no part of the book is my position supported by a more plentiful and diversified array of unassailable Scriptural proof. But just as Luke's "many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3) had absolutely no weight with the typical Jew, so is it almost certain that the following procession of Scriptural passages and their organic cohesion and structural correlation will seem like just so much insufferable nonsense to the average Christian of the easy-going, self-indulgent Laodiceanism of these deeply intoxicated and hilarious days.

Matthew 7:21-27

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. 24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat

upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

The traditional or orthodox interpretation of this Scripture says this man who "worked iniquity" was a man of the world, a sinner among sinners, and that he has gone to hell and is lost for the endless ages of eternity.

On the contrary I believe that he was a born-again, blood-bought son of God who is facing His Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and that he was judged unworthy to inherit that age (the Kingdom of Heaven) and the resurrection of the dead. That he will spend the next one thousand years in Outer Darkness, and that at the end of this one thousand years he shall have served out the sentence of judgment imposed on him by his Holy Judge; that then he shall come forth and take his place among the redeemed in glory.

Yes, yes, I hear the orthodox exclaim, "Purgatory! Purgatory! Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live." But invective is not argument, and the mandate of conventionality cannot silence the voice of God in the breast of any man to whom truth and righteousness are dearer than the plaudits of the crowd.

I would ask the lover of traditionalism what authority he has for his bold assumption that this man is eternally lost? Does the narrative say so? Does any portion of the Bible say so? Or does it warrant such a conclusion? I think not. Then the very best that can be said on the orthodox side, after a careful reading, is that the Word of God neither affirms nor denies in regard to the finality or non-finality of his position and state in the place to which he departed.

We all know, perhaps even from our childhood, that this man is looked upon as irretrievably and eternally lost. The Lord only knows how many thousands and even millions of sermons have been preached on "eternal punishment" with this narrative as the text.

But we must keep in sight the fact that this portion of Scripture concerns *entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven* (v. 21) – indeed, the entire Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7, concerns this same subject only. The Sermon on the Mount is a detailed description of how we must live our lives if we are to attain that exalted age. And the verses quoted above are the capstone of the entire Sermon on the Mount.

My aim is to rightly divide the Scriptures. I must admit, however, that if I succeed in the accomplishment of such a task, the traditional advocates of this doctrine will find themselves deprived of a huge amount of their munitions. For example, we cannot allow them any longer to translate the Hebrew *olam* and the Greek *aionios* into English by the words *eternal* or *everlasting*, or the Greek *eis tonaiona* by *forever*. Nor can we longer tolerate the application to unbelievers of passages of Scripture which manifestly belong to Christians, such as Heb. 6:2, 6:4-8; 10:27-31; Matt. 5:21-26.

But in doing so we must not overlook the terrific force of such portions as: *"The smoke of their torment ascendeth up unto the ages of the ages"* (Rev. 14:11). So also Matt. 12:30-31. Note, however, that neither of these passages applies to the unsaved *generally*, but to *certain unbelievers* guilty of special forms of evil.

The light of truth has, in the last four hundred years, compelled Rome to give up much which she once thought necessary to her very existence. Protestantism has also many lessons to learn in this direction. There is nothing but loss to humanity and dishonor to God in the false interpretation and perversion of His infallible word. I want all I can get of it, not only in my mind, but especially in my heart and will. There is no other salvation.

What had this man done to merit the supposed doom of eternal, unending damnation? The fact is, so far as the narrative goes, that he had done "many wonderful works", and the Lord did not deny his works. What the Lord *did* tell him was that he did not obey Him. Have you ever considered that the wonderful works that you are doing may not have been directed by Him? That perhaps you are doing things, even good things, that He has not told you to do, and that you are ignoring the things He has told you to do?

But, you say, how can the Lord deny that He knows me? A phrase similar to this has already been discussed in the section concerning the Parable of the Ten Virgins – "I know you not". But that "not knowing" was particularly in reference to the Wedding. Jesus, at the Judgment Seat (afterwards came the other virgins), specifically told the five foolish virgins that He did not recognize them as worthy to be a part of the Bride of Christ. The "door was shut" at that point, and those of the living coming subsequently to appear before the Judgment Seat were too late to be a part of that special and very glorious reward – the Bride of Christ. Wedding guests – potentially yes; but the Bride – no. At this point you may be asking, are not the Bride of Christ and the wedding guests one and the same? We can see this division in Psalm 45:

Psalms 45:13-14

The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. 14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

But in the verse under consideration in this chapter, Jesus is speaking with reference to entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. The point of contrast in these two – "I know you not" and "I never knew you" – is simply that not all of those granted entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven will be part of the Bride of Christ. There is a point in time that had already passed for the five foolish virgins.

So then, this "*I never knew you*" is a more general denial, one that has to do with the *overall* entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

So then, what is this denial of knowing these? I briefly answered this in a previous chapter, but it deserves repeating here. Consider what the Lord said to Peter:

Matthew 26:34

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

And in what manner did Peter fulfill this prophecy?

Matthew 26:70-74

70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.

Therefore, we can readily see that the essence of Peter's "denying" the Lord was that he said, "I know him not". So then, when the Lord said to these, "I never knew you", He was, according to the Lord's own example, denying them. In 2 Timothy we find this interesting statement:

2 Timothy 2:12

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

That Paul is speaking of Christians is very clear because of his use of the word "we". So then, how can a blood-bought child of God deny his Lord? We find a seldom considered answer in Titus:

Titus 1:16

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Remember, in the passage in Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus says the basis of determining entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven is *doing* "the will of my Father which is in heaven".

These profess that they know God. How can a Christian not know God?

1 John 2:3-4

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Consider that in the above verse the Apostle John is addressing Christians, not the unsaved. The unsaved do not have the spiritual capacity to understand the spiritual meaning of his words. Read the first chapter of 1John again; perhaps you will see that he is not talking about or to the unsaved. So then, truly knowing Jesus, in the Biblical sense, is conditioned upon *keeping His commandments*. Or, you could say in the negative, it is conditioned upon not being disobedient. Consider again this same verse:

Titus 1:16

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

So then, here we see a Christian who professes to know God; but according to 1 John 2:3-4 quoted above, if he is disobedient, this saved person does not really know God. The word translated here as reprobate also means "rejected" or "castaway". Paul kept his "*body under*", lest he himself should be declared a '*castaway*' and therefore be rejected at the Judgment Seat (1Cor 9:27). Were the persons referred to above to stand before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ, all of their good works would be rejected. Why? Because they were done in disobedience. These were "good" works the Holy Spirit did not direct them to do. The Lord does not recognize "good" works done in the flesh. He says they are abominable. Cain brought an offering before the Lord from the works of his flesh, and his offering was rejected by God. Cain knew what God required; but in disobedience he thought to bring before God what was right in his own eyes. Therefore, he did not act in faith to what God had said.

1 John 3:12

*Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him?
Because his own works were evil (wicked, bad), and his brother's righteous.*

In a like manner, it is possible for a Christian to do works through disobedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the Holy Spirit did not tell them to do them); these are works of the flesh, and in so doing these works, they deny the One Who would have them do good works in the power of the Spirit. The Scripture says that in so doing, they deny Him.

Works done in the flesh are not acceptable to God; if they were, then the flesh would get the glory; God Himself, and Himself only, must get the glory.

*1 Corinthians 1:29
That no flesh should glory in his presence.*

Furthermore, Scripture says that the flesh is incapable of doing good works.

*Romans 7:18
For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

*Galatians 6:8
For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

I have experienced works of the flesh myself. On more than one occasion, the Lord has rebuked me for doing what I considered good works, but in reality they were not directed by Him. I am still learning to "wait on the Lord". We must do His works in His time and in the power of the Holy Spirit in order to please Him.

I will repeat the above quoted verse:

*2 Timothy 2:12
If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:*

The above Christians have by their works of the flesh denied Him, and Jesus will accordingly deny them – by saying "I never knew you" at the Judgment Seat of Christ – just as Peter so said when he denied the Lord. These Christians have had all their wood, hay, and stubble burnt up at the Judgment Seat, and they have no gold, silver, or precious stones remaining. They had no acceptable good works – whether works of personal sanctification or works of personal service - produced through the Holy Spirit. Likewise, such is the case of the "unprofitable" servant described in the Parable of the Talents.

In Matthew 7:21-23 we see that only works done in "the will of my Father which is in heaven" are considered good works in His sight. Here the Lord does not contest that many wonderful (miraculous) works were done, or even that they preached, or cast out devils. He implies that for these works to be considered "good" in His eyes, they must be done in obedience ("he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"). Therefore, he describes those that do such as "workers of iniquity" (lawlessness – they did not do it in accordance with His lawful rule over them).

Jesus Himself did no good works on His own; He only did as directed by the Father:

John 5:19

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

Furthermore, Jesus said that works done in the flesh without Him are "nothing"; the only works that count are works (fruit) produced while abiding in Him:

John 15:5

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

But this denial by the Lord has a special meaning; it is a denial of knowing these for a specific purpose: and that is - *entrance into the Kingdom*. The Greek word used here for "know" is *ginosko* (Strong's 1097). To quote from Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary:

"oida (the perfect tense of eido) expresses the fact that the object has simply come within the scope of the knower's perception; thus in Matt. 7:23 'I never knew you' (*ginosko*) suggests 'I have never been in approving connection with you'.

So this denial, as used in the verse under consideration (Matt. 7:23), means "you do not stand in an approved relation to Me"; therefore I deny (reject, disavow) you (as pertaining to the issue of entrance into the Kingdom).

Obviously, the Lord knows everything in His omniscience. But because of the failure to hear His voice, and do it (because of this disobedience), He does not have the deep relationship He would have desired. And, in the context of this verse, He does not "approve" or "recognize" you as being worthy of the group entering the Kingdom of Heaven; He has denied you.

1 John 2:3-6

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

The above verse says it all. If we do not keep His commandments, we do not know Him in a truly Biblical sense. Period. Jesus said in John:

John 10:27

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

Most Christians read the above passage and assume it applies to them because they are born-again. But the passage actually puts forth the qualifications of those whom He knows. Jesus said that the qualifications of "*I know them*" is that they not only hear His voice, but that they follow Him (obey Him). A Christian who does not hear and obey His voice is not following Him, and therefore the Lord can say of

that Christian, *"I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* James expresses a similar thought:

James 1:22

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

In other words, as applies to our passage in question, "Don't just *hear* my voice: do it!" (Obey my voice). Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves that you are truly His sheep.

Please consider the following points:

1.) It is a universal law of nature and of the Kingdom of God that "on one side" sin and suffering are inseparable, and that God's laws are just and beneficent. The law (The law of Christ) holds in the present age and also in the age to come. And it is equally true that on the "other side" obedience and blessing are inseparable.

2.) The present age is, for believers, specifically the age of sowing, and that to come is the age of *ultimate* reaping (Luke 18:28-30; Gal. 6:6-8). What believers know of sorrow or joy between the new birth and their decease is only of an anticipatory character - an earnest. Of course, we must distinguish between the sorrow of the world which works death, and that of the fellowship of the Cross which works life (2Cor. 4:11-18).

3.) It is no part of the intention of God in the atonement effected by Christ on Calvary to put a premium on sinfulness in the lives of His people, but rather the reverse (Rom. 6:1-3, 15, 16; Heb. 10:26-31; Rev. 1-3). But it is inappropriate to deny the openly apparent fact that the traditional interpretation does encourage sin and general lawlessness in the lives of believers.

4.) The Scriptures teach that when a man repents and comes to Christ all his *past* sins are forgiven and put away as far as the east is from the west. Not so, however, with sins committed after being born again. These may or may not be forgiven in this life, this age. These must be repented of, and confessed to the Lord in accordance with 1John 1:9 in order to be forgiven and cleansed. Consider the "if" in 1John 1:9-

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we do not confess our sins, the rest of the verse does not apply. And, accordingly, these sins will be held against him at the Judgment Seat, where the account must be squared in the age to come (Matt. 5:21-26; 18:21-34). This does not teach that God will *never* forgive the sin of His child, but simply that he will pay the penalty God's holiness demands; the time for payment is the Millennium..

Matthew 5:26

Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

2 Peter 1:9

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

5.) The Holy Spirit makes it very clear through Paul that the Jewish dispensation (if I may so designate it) and the Christian dispensation stand related as type and antitype. There are some prominent marks in the analogy: Both began in special manifestations of God. Compare Exo. 12-14 and Acts 1-3.

- a). Both very quickly went into a state of apostasy (Judges 2; Acts 20:28-30; Rev. 2, 3).
- b). Both are finally rejected of God (Hosea 1:11, 1:13; Rev. 3:14-17; Rev. 2:1-7).
- c). In each case there is a spared remnant which remains faithful (Isa. 65:1-16; Heb. 11; Rom. 8:28-39; Rev. 3:4; Matt. 7:13, 14, 24, 25-27).
- d). In each case God holds the religious leaders of the people responsible for the apostasy [Ezek. 34; Isa. 3:12; Hosea 4:6; Acts 20:28-30; 1Tim. 4:1-3; Rev. 2:1, 12, 18; 3:1, 14 (Angel-pastor, preacher)].
- e). And, finally, all the backsliders of both dispensations will be ultimately restored at the end of the coming age. Surely this is the Gospel of a rational and divine optimism (Hosea 2:14-23; Matt. 5:21-26; Acts 3:21).

But let us, under this fifth head, be more specific so as to see the exact agreement of type and anti-type:

- (1) In case of disobedience on the part of the people He had redeemed from Egyptian bondage, God threatened the most awful judgments conceivable (Lev. 26 and Deut. 28). Paul says these things happened unto them for examples to us (1Cor. 10:1-10). *"He that hath ears to hear let him hear."* How often the master used that expression. The Jews, too, were sure they could hear and see (Matt. 13:10-17).
- (2) He told them that if they forsook Him He would forsake them and give them up to His four sore judgments, and He kept His word (Ezek. 14:21; Matt. 18:1-34).
- (3) Jehovah declared in the most solemn manner that when the cup of their iniquity was full, nothing would turn Him from His purpose to judge, and chastise, and afflict. The only deliverance then and now is righteousness of life and holiness of character (Ezek. 14:12-14; Heb. 12:14). The language of Ezek. 5-7 is awfully solemn, but it is the word of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Holy One of Israel. So is Matt. 18:1-34.
- (4) He threatened them with expulsion from their land and He brought it to pass (Isa. 6:9-12; 2 Kings 17:13-23; 25:1-25; Deut. 31:16-21; Rev. 3:16). The suffering in these captivities must have been indescribably great.
- (5) The great sin of Israel was spiritual adultery. They claimed to be the chosen people of God and yet they loved the fellowship of the world. This leads inevitably to gross immorality (Ezek. 16; 23-37; Hos. 4-2, 13, 14; Exo. 20:14). So it is in the Church. (Jas. 4:4; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 2:22; Matt. 5:32). See what Israel and the Church ought to be, and ideally are, and some day actually will be (Ezek. 16:9-14; 2Cor. 11:2).

But notwithstanding the apostasy of the mass of believers in both ages, God the Father through the Holy Spirit has been gathering out a Bride, a virgin, for His Son – a bride who in the millennial age will be His constant companion. She will be very pure, very beautiful, and wonderfully glorious (Lev. 21:14; Psalms 45; Rev. 14:1-5; 19:5-9). Note the inner significance of Lev. 21:14. Contrast 2Cor. 12:19-21.

Those who would have a place in the Bride of Christ must enter personally into a special covenant. Listen to the Holy Spirit through Isaiah: *"Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting (age-lasting) covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."* (Isa. 55:3). This has no reference to eternity. Before Christ descends into the air He will say to the angels, *"Gather my saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."* (Psalms 50:5). See Rom. 12:1, 2.

(6) The failure of Israel to enter the Promised Land was to Paul a type of the prospective failure of the Christian Church of this age to enter the Messianic Kingdom (Num. 14; Hebrews 3, 4; Gal. 5:19-21; 1Cor. 10:1-10; Jude 5; Matt. 7:13, 14).

(7) He affirms that just as in Israel the natural branches were cut off because of unbelief and sin, so shall it be with the Church (Rom. 11:13-24; John 15:6). But it is not a final excision. It is to the Jews for this age. To the Church, to all but the few, the excision will be from the bliss and glory of the Messianic Age. But in due time God will "graft them in again" (Rom. 11:22-24; Acts 3:21). Type and antitype agree everywhere. But do not overlook the fact that while Jewish and Christian branches are cut off, the trunk of the Olive Tree is not thereby affected. It is rooted deeply in the soil of God's wisdom, power and love as set forth in the Abrahamic Covenant and in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the "Seed" promised in that Covenant. He said *"I am the true Vine"* (John 15:1-10). He could also have said with equal felicity, "I am the never-failing Olive Tree" (Rom. 11:17).

(8) The Holy Spirit indicates that because the age of Grace is one of greater light than that of the age of Law, the penalty for disobedience will be relatively that much greater (Heb. 2:1-3).

Please consider the following verses:

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting [age-lasting] destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

The universal interpretation of this passage, as to the judgment foretold, has applied it to unbelievers and to them only. But, astonishing as it may appear at first sight, I am convinced that its reference is to carnal believers. It was one of the fatal errors of the Jews to imagine that because they were the children of Abraham they could never by any possibility become the objects of God's displeasure; or that their beautiful City and magnificent Temple could ever be desecrated by Gentile supremacy. In this also they are a type of the Christian Church. Such is the power and folly of devotion to the traditions of men.

Let us look for a moment at the passage under consideration. Note the following points:

- (a) - Very few Christians have suffered for the Kingdom's sake;
- (b) - only a small proportion of them believe in the pre-millennial coming;
- (c) - very few of them know God (1 John 2:3-6);
- (d) - very few of them obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this they are like Israel (I Sam. 15:22; Jer. 7:23; 2 Thess. 3:14; Heb. 5:9);
- (e) - there is something more serious than *age-lasting* destruction for non-believers – *eternal* destruction.
- (f) – "His saints" in verse 10 does not here include all believers, but those that have really lived holy lives. See Heb. 12:14 in contrast with 1Cor. 3:1-15 and Gal. 5:19-21;
- (g) – "To be admired in all them that believe". Here again not all believers are included but only those who believe the full gospel, and by the grace of God live it out in their lives.

This interpretation agrees perfectly with Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24; 1Cor. 10:1-10; Rom. 11:14-24; Gal. 6:7-8; Rom. 2:1-11; and Rev. 3:14-20. Paul affirms that "*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*" One has only to examine the history of Christianity ever so superficially to see the prevalence of these sins in the Church ever since the days of the Apostles. I feel free to say with absolute assurance that this is the truth: that he who accepts the Post-Millenarian (and also the amillenarian) interpretation of the Scriptures is holding the truth in unrighteousness.

In 2 Thess. 1:9 we have the expression "everlasting destruction." Now it is certain that no man who has in him God's free gift of eternal life can ever suffer "*eternal destruction*" from the presence of the Lord; but he may suffer *age-lasting* destruction. This is clear from Matt. 10:37-39 and John 8:51. God's ancient people, with few exceptions, are even now undergoing this kind of destruction. It has been assumed that neither *olethros* nor *apoleia* (both translated *destruction*) are ever applied to the believer in the scriptures; but this is a wholly gratuitous assumption which is in perfect keeping with many other unscriptural factors in traditional eschatology. I will not enlarge on this point at the present time.

But it is a sobering thought to think that of the six hundred thousand men who came out of Egypt under the power of the blood of the Passover Lamb, only two - Joshua and Caleb - entered the land of promise. It is significant that not one of the tribe of Levi, whose work it was to minister to God in the Holy things of the Tabernacle, had faith enough, and loyalty to Jehovah enough, to enter the land promised to Abraham their father. All the others, even Moses, died in the wilderness. What food for meditation and serious reflection there is in this solemn fact! We should remember that the sin of Moses was not like that of the people. He was not guilty of murmuring. Yet in the face of these most solemn warnings, orthodox teachers tell us that the believer is, at the moment of his death, made perfect in glory, and this in direct opposition of the other fact that the Holy Spirit through Paul says:

Hebrews 2:1-3

For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense or reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.

In reference to the aforementioned Thess. 1:7-10, the orthodox interpreter faces a dilemma: The reference is either to believers or unbelievers. If to believers, then there is surely *age-lasting* judgment for those who disbelieve and disobey the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Heb. 6:2). On the other hand, if it belongs only to unbelievers, then he must admit he is a restitutionist, for in this case the wicked will not suffer eternally, but only one thousand years, for I have demonstrated in Chapter 11 that *aionios* in all references to the future is limited to the millennial period. Let the reader decide where he stands.

There are, as already remarked, two great motives to holy living. They are love and fear, and in the nature of things they are complimentary for the same reason that God is to be both loved and feared. He is to be loved for what He is and what He does for His creatures both in creation and redemption; and He is to be feared because of His holiness, His hatred of sin, and the certainty that He will punish it. In the very nature of things the man who loves God most will fear Him most. The Scriptures say, "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them (and them only) His covenant*". Yes, even of the Lord of glory it is said, "*He was heard in that He feared*" (Heb. 5:7). How blessed it would have been for the children of Israel if at Kadesh-Barnea they had feared the unbelief and disobedience of their own hearts rather than the giants and walled cities of Canaan. Compare Numbers 13 and 14 with Hebrews 3 and 4.

6. In His beautiful and solemn teaching on the vine and its branches, the Master shows that one of two things must happen: The branch (the believer) must bear fruit or be cut off and cast into the fire. This figure would appeal vividly to the Eastern mind because it was a land of vineyards. But we must not carry the figure too far lest we lend support to the doctrine of annihilation. The *standing* of the believer, thus cut off, is not affected. Nor was that of the Jew who was cut off, for if so how could it be said that he would be grafted AGAIN into his own olive tree? The leprous, or unclean, Israelite was put out of the Camp, but he did not thereby cease to be a member of that Camp. He simply lost for a time the enjoyment of the rights and privileges associated with that position.

Every believer must have his baptism of fire in order to destroy the self-life and make room for the Christ-life; and this baptism will be either in this age or in that to come. Thus John 15:6 agrees with Heb. 6:4-8; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:6-8.

7. In Matt. 18:1-34 Christ speaks most solemnly of the responsibilities of discipleship, and of the moral accountability of His followers in the Day of Judgment. Why should preachers and commentators hand this chapter over to unbelievers? There had been a contention among the Apostles as to which of them would be the greatest in the coming Kingdom. At that time they did not understand the nature of the Kingdom. Nor did they see that the rejection of Messiah necessitated the postponement of it; nor yet that the death and resurrection of the Son of Man was the first step in that direction. It was not until after the resurrection of Christ, and in the conversations of the forty days after, and the experience at and after Pentecost that the dispensational purpose of God for this age was made perfectly clear to them (Acts 1:1-14; 2:1-36; 3:17-21).

To affirm, as postmillenarians do, that the Apostles, even after the ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, were deceived as to the nature of the Kingdom and the true character of this

dispensation is silly nonsense, and betrays woeful ignorance of God's Plan of the Ages. Some say also that the Apostles expected the return of Christ in their own life time. This is contradicted by Acts 20:28-30; 2 Pet. 1:13-15; 2 Thess. 2:3; Matt. 25:19 (it has indeed been after a long time - now over 1,900 years). Besides, the prophetic succession of the Seven Churches had to run its appointed course. Sardis was only reached in post-reformation times, and we have only lately entered the Laodicean Period. And these Seven Messages are in line with Matt. 18:1-34. Are the Candlesticks of the big denominations still in their place and burning, and does the One like unto the "Son of Man" still walk in the midst? I think not.

8. Speaking of His coming to judge at the close of this age, and with no reference whatever to the farther eschatological horizon at the close of the age to come, the Master says:

Matthew 7:21-23

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

It is fashionable to assume that "ye that work iniquity" includes only unbelievers. But is it not a lamentable fact that Christians in general these days do iniquity with avidity? With what schemes for pleasure-getting and money-making are they not mixed up? Look at Matt. 13:41, 49 in the light of 1Cor. 3:1-15; Gal. 5:19-21; Matt. 13:34; 1Cor. 10:1-10. *"If we would judge ourselves we would not be judged."* (1Cor. 11:31); (Rev. 3:14-20).

I remind you that the scene described in the above quoted verses is the Judgment Seat of Christ, and that only believers will be at this judgment.

The subject at hand is entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, not salvation by grace. Christ Himself defined "ye that work iniquity" in that very same passage – these are they who do not do "the will of my Father which is in heaven".

Matthew 7:24-27

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

In the above passage, the Lord divides all believers into two different groups – those that hear His word and do it (the wise men), and they that hear His word and don't do it (the foolish men). This is comparable to the five wise and the five foolish virgins. The great fall of the house of the foolish man whose house was built upon the sand comes at the Judgment Seat of Christ, when he is cast into outer darkness. The foolish men are "they that work iniquity"; they hear His word, and refuse to obey it.

And what could possibly be more offensive to Him who prayed so earnestly for the unity of His people in love than this huge Mustard Tree, this gigantic and universal system of Denominationalism with its

historical jealousies, unseemly rivalries and corrupt theologies, professing to be His duly appointed representative in the earth? I can only think of His reaction – "*I will vomit you out of my mouth*". It is a union of all these religious organizations on a basis from which every fundamental principle of Christian truth and righteousness has been eliminated – and thus the heaven has done its complete work.

9. The purpose of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), is to show the way into the Messianic Kingdom. Some preachers are inclined to look upon it as Utopian, as presenting an impossible standard for the individual, and an inaccessible ideal for society. They say, or assume, that its value lies in its ideality. But as a matter of fact there will be none in the Messianic Kingdom, on its celestial side at least, except those who have walked in this glorious pathway. Only God knows the standard which must be attained.

How beautiful are the Beatitudes of the Master: Blessed are the meek; Blessed are the pure in heart; Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness; Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. What does the average Christian of this Laodicean age know of this blessedness? Absolutely nothing. His whole life is ordered on the basis of the law of self-preservation and self-gratification, and this in the face of the Master's solemn warning as to the peril of such a course (Matt. 10:37-39; John 12:23-26).

When Christ uttered that startling warning in Matt. 7:13, no doubt He had especially in mind His own people. On the contrary, orthodoxy takes it for granted that believers cannot be found in the broad way to destruction. When the believer indulges the flesh and walks with the world, delighting in its ideals, and sharing its ambitions, he is in the broad way to destruction, *so far as the Messianic Kingdom is concerned*. Paul is very emphatic and specific in his unqualified declaration that those believers who give themselves up to the works of the flesh shall not enter the Messianic Kingdom. Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 1:18; 2:3-11; Phil. 3:17-19.

10. John says, *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power*. Rev. 20:6. Compare the word *blessed* with Matt. 5:1-12; and *holy* (hagios) with *righteous* (dikaios). See Heb. 12:14.

From this it is clear that none but those who have in some definite degree the qualities expressed in Matt. 5:1-12 will share in the first resurrection. The meaning of the "second death" is easily gathered from Mark 9:38-50; Heb. 10:26-31; 12:25-29; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; and when he says, "*But the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection*" (Rev. 20:5). What an inconceivable loss it will be to the Christian to be shut out from the Messianic Kingdom for a thousand years, and confined in the prison of Gehenna (Matt. 5:21-26). Surely the "wages of sin is death" for the carnal Christian as well as for the unbeliever. And why should it not be so? For the carnal believer, this death will occur at the Judgment Seat of Christ ("*shall lose it* (his life Mat. 16:25); *shall suffer loss*" (1Cor 3:15).

Romans 8:13

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Consider the following points:

(1) Christ assures us that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven in the age to come, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness (at least not in the age to come). Matt. 12:31-

32. Let both parts of the above propositions have all the force which the language of the Master will permit.

(2) The ground of the final deliverance, of all who ever shall be saved, is the atoning death and effectual intercession of Jesus Christ - the God-Man; and also, so far as it concerns believers who have died in disobedience and sin, the fact of their imperishable standing in Christ.

Consider a few of the outstanding features of the apostasy of the Christian Church throughout this age:

1. The very early abandonment of the Hope of the Apostolic Church in the Premillennial Coming of Christ, and the adoption of the Post-millenarian view.
2. The very rapid development of Nicolaitanism in its threefold progressive manifestation in Presbyterianism, Episcopacy, and Popery. Nicolaitanism is the enslavement of the people through the instrumentality of Church government and false doctrine. The woman who mixes the leaven (of error in doctrine and polity) in the meal of God's truth is the same in every case. The only difference is that of degree (Matt. 13:33).
3. The adulterous union of the Christian Church with the Pagan Roman Empire at the beginning of the fourth century. The address to the angel of the Church in Pergamos has its prophetic application here. Rev. 2:12-16; James 4:4; 2Cor. 6:14-18.
4. The Roman Catholic perversion of the Bible Doctrine of works. The address to the Church in Thyatira forecasts this. Rev. 2:18-24.
5. The Protestant perversion of the Bible Doctrine of Grace. The Sardian letter applies here. Rev. 3:1-4. Of the last two each is the complement of the other. The deception is one, while the manifestation is two-fold.

There are, as I have pointed out earlier, two great motives to holy living. They are the love of God and the fear of God. These include the love of truth and righteousness and holiness; and also the hatred of sin in all its abstract and concrete forms. The Father says with delight to the Son during His life on earth, *"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil (the Holy Spirit) of joy above Thy fellows"* (Heb. 1:9). What is it that keeps thousands of people from stealing other people's property? Nothing but a sober fear of the civil law. God intended it should be so, not only in civil but also in divine government. The atonement was not intended to abolish the law of cause and effect (Matt. 5:17), but rather to emphasize and glorify it.

Through an antinomian perversion of God's truth the Churches have turned the doctrine of free grace into a Divine approval of sin; and Christian liberty into a license to practice iniquity with impunity. Christ's answer to that is *"depart from me, ye that work iniquity"*.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Where Do Unfaithful Christians Go?

There are many who place a strong emphasis on the Judgment Seat who believe that carnal Christians must spend a portion or all of the millennial age in *outer darkness*. This view is growing in popularity as the vast proliferation of carnality is provoking many Christian leaders to re-examine the warning passages addressed to the saints.

The view of this book is that this *outer darkness* is the temporary prison described in the Bible as "in the heart of the earth". Carnal Christians will spend the millennium in this prison. It is a future place of disciplinary punishment with a view to restoration for saved saints who did not obey God.

For the warnings in the Bible to fully accomplish their intended purpose among the saints, they must be taught and preached in their full force. Jesus has not simply spoken in parabolic form to warn His disciples. He has told them literally, on multiple occasions, what unfaithful Christians will experience at the Judgment Seat and where they will spend the millennium. He openly warns them of the danger of going to this place during the millennium. While it is a fact that while Christ's warnings to His own are not warnings about being tormented in the Lake of Fire for all eternity (i.e., losing salvation), they are, nevertheless, far more dreadful than many are willing to admit.

Although there is an increasing number of Christians that are willing to take these warnings in full force (without denying eternal security), this view is admittedly the least popular concerning the warning passages. It is certainly not difficult to understand why this is the case when we consider what the Bible teaches about the state of the majority of Churches in these last days.

2 Timothy 4:2-5

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

It is inconsistent to argue that Christ's parabolic warnings are addressed to *true* disciples and then refuse to admit the same when He warns the same disciples literally. If the warnings to believers (whether in parabolic form or not) are not literal, what happens to the warnings to the lost?

In Matthew 25:30, the subject is an unprofitable servant. On other occasions, Jesus taught that such servants would actually miss the kingdom *entirely* and would be banished to Gehenna (unfortunately translated as "hell" in most versions of the Bible). But first, let us examine the various places described in the Bible as being in the "underworld".

"Hell" as Used in Scripture

1.) Hades – misleadingly referred to in Scripture as "hell". It is the place where *all* departed souls go upon death. But we must remember that Hades is described as having two distinct compartments, with a "great gulf fixed" separating them. On one side, we have the place where all the saved of all the ages are – referred to in Scripture as "Abraham's Bosom – which is a place of comfort. This entire description is clearly seen in Luke 16:

Luke 16:22-26

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

On the one side, being tormented in flames, is the region where the unsaved go at death. This is the temporary prison and abode of lost, damned souls awaiting the Great White Throne judgment. The present occupants of this region have already been judged as to their final destination for all eternity – the Lake of Fire. John 3:18 describes this condemnation:

John 3:18

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

All that remains for these lost souls is the final Great White Throne judgment, at which point God will determine the severity of their eternal punishment based on their works, good or bad.

But it is absolutely vital to remember that the term "hell", or "Hades", consists of the entire region of all departed souls, and it includes on one side comfort, and on the other side torment. As to which side a particular verse of Scripture is referring must be determined by the context of the verse.

Scripture clearly states (Acts 2:31) that Jesus went here for three days after His burial (Acts 2:27, 31), but I firmly believe that He went to the saved side - Abraham's Bosom - to await His resurrection. I believe it is a grave error, even blasphemous, when some of today's teachers say otherwise.

There is a widespread teaching in today's Church that Jesus defeated Satan after three days in Hell, the unsaved side of Hades. But in stark opposition to this fallacious fairytale is John 19:30 where Jesus says – It is finished:

John 19:30

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

And *this* is where the orthodox view of the atonement begins, and ends - on the cross of Golgotha. As a matter of fact, "it is finished" – tetelestai – in the original Greek can also be rendered "paid in full." It was the word found stamped on Roman tax receipts in the first century after one had paid their taxes. Christ died on the cross as the *Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world*.

Let me also remind you God the Holy Spirit has already warned us to expect such false teachings:

2 Peter 2:1-3

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you [in their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have mad up]: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Christ *did* make a public example of Satan's defeat; *upon the cross (this victory was affirmed three days later upon His Resurrection)*, and not in Hell! Here is the whole of Colossians 2: 14-15:

Colossians 2:14-15

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it..

Romans also confirms that it was upon His death on the cross that we were reconciled to God

Romans 5:10

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Some word of faith teachers do not believe in His victory on the cross. They teach that it was not completed on the cross, but in a battle in hell with the devil. This imaginative battle actually brings destruction to the gospel as to where Jesus truly conquered Satan – which was on the cross, not in hell.

Verse 14 clearly shows the victory happened on the cross. So why do these teachers picture Christ suffering in Hell by these same principalities and powers? This doctrine is dangerous and affects many others. If Jesus defeated Satan in hell, then He did not speak the truth by saying "It is finished" on the cross. The death of Christ on the cross is then insufficient, not having the power by itself to save anyone; and Paul could not have said what he said about it – that he preached Christ crucified for salvation.

All the New Testament Verses Concerning "Hades"

Forgive me if I seem tedious by listing each and every verse, but I hope to make a very important point. In order that there will be no confusion concerning this region of the underworld, I will list each verse using this Greek word Hades (Strong's 86); please review each verse carefully, and if possible, without regard to your previous doctrinal mindset:

Matthew 11:23

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Matthew 16:18

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Luke 10:15

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

Luke 16:23

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Acts 2:27

Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, [Abraham's Bosom] neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Acts 2:31

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, [Abraham's Bosom] neither his flesh did see corruption.

1 Corinthians 15:55

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Revelation 1:18

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Revelation 6:8

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Revelation 20:13

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Revelation 20:14

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

As I stated earlier, a cursory examination of the use of "Hades" in all the New Testament verses above should lead you to the obvious conclusion that this is the underworld abode of the dead. As to which side, lost or saved, must be determined by the context.

It should be remembered that the unsaved dead are said to spend the future millennium in *Hades*. The dead come up out of Hades *after* the millennial kingdom: *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hell (i.e. Hades) delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and Hell (i.e. hades) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (Revelation 20:13)*

2). Tartarus – (Greek tartaroo – Strong's 5020) – the deepest abyss of Hades. This is a lower section of Hades sometimes referred to in Scripture as the pit, or the abyss; and it is translated as "hell" in the KJV. This is a prison for certain fallen angels; Satan will be bound here for 1,000 years during the Millennium. There is only one verse that uses this particular word, but the region is referred to elsewhere:

2 Peter 2:4

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Matthew 25:41

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Revelation 20:2-3

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit (the abyss), and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

3). Gehenna – (Greek geena – Strong's 1067) – it is defined in Strong's as "of Hebrew origin [OT:1516 and OT:2011]; valley of (the son of) Hinnom; ge-heena (or Ge-Hinnom), a valley of Jerusalem, used (figuratively) as a name for the place (or state) of everlasting punishment."

I use this definition to show what the scholars say. Unfortunately, this definition is not *entirely* correct, as I intend to demonstrate (it is a place of "age-lasting" punishment.) Again, I will list each and every verse that uses this particular Greek word:

Matthew 5:22

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

The above verse was spoken to saved disciples; the use of the word "brother" further confirms this.

Matthew 5:29

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Again, only the saved are in view here. This can be confirmed by referring to the parallel verses listed below which show the alternative to entering this "hell" as entering into "life", or "the Kingdom of God". Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is in view here, and therefore this verse falls into the Gospel of the Glory of God rather than the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Matthew 5:30

And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Matthew 10:28

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 18:9

And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

Matthew 23:15

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Some of the Pharisees and Sadducees were considered "saved"; they had availed themselves of the Old Covenant, and they believed in the sacrificial system as God's provision to cover their sins. Through this belief, it was accounted to them as righteousness; and they were true Jews, because their circumcision was that of the heart, and not just the flesh. (Rom. 2:29). Through this belief in what God had said, they were born-again. Remember, Jesus told the Pharisee Nicodemus that he must be born again.

When Jesus said He came to the "lost house of Israel" He did not mean that they were all unsaved; He meant that they were lost on the broad road to perdition. They were not following God, and the entire nation was under the curse of disobedience (Deu. 28:15-68). This disobedience has dire consequences, just as it does for Christians.

Matthew 23:33

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Mark 9:43

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

Notice that in the verse above and the two below that the alternative to entering into to hell is to enter into "life" (the Kingdom of Heaven).

Mark 9:45

And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

Mark 9:47

And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

Luke 12:5

But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

James 3:6

And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

(The use of "hell" in this last verse is not meant to be taken literally; i.e., the tongue in question is not *literally* on fire. This verse is not germane to our discussion.)

A careful consideration of the above verses in the context in which they were spoken should reveal that Salvation of the Soul is in view here in every case. Jesus was telling *saved* people of the consequences of continued disobedience to Him. He commanded them everywhere to, "*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*". In every dispensation, one is saved through believing in the blood of the Passover Lamb. Obedience or disobedience comes into view only *after* one is saved.

Gehenna, the other word indiscriminately translated "hell" in most English translations of the New Testament, is the only word for "hell" which came from the lips of Jesus during His earthly ministry. Every appearance of this word in the gospel accounts is in passages dealing with entrance into or exclusion from the kingdom of the heavens. *Thus, Christ did not use the word at all in connection with the issues of eternal salvation or eternal damnation.*

Gehenna, the Fiery Valley of Hinnom, was south of Jerusalem; and during the days when Christ was upon the earth this valley was the place of refuse for the city of Jerusalem. *Gehenna* was the receptacle for all kinds of corruption. The sewage of the city flowed into this valley, and it was customary to cast the carcasses of dead animals therein. Even the bodies of executed criminals, by order of the Sanhedrin, were sometimes cast into this valley.

In Matt. 5:22, 29-30 the word is used in connection with judgment in the local Jewish courts and the judgment of the Council, which was the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin possessed the power to inflict a sentence of death by stoning, and also, should the Sanhedrin so rule, the punishment could be intensified by ordering the corpse to be cast into the Valley of Hinnom. The decrees and determinations rendered by these earthly courts were used by the Lord to call attention to parallel decrees and determinations which will be rendered by a heavenly court, with the severest penalty being the same as that seen in the earthly courts – *death*, followed by the person *being cast into Gehenna*.

In Matt. 23:13, 25-28, 33 the Scribes and Pharisees were in danger of "the damnation of hell" [*lit.*, 'the judgment of *Gehenna*'] because they had closed the door to the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the nation of Israel. In Mark 9:43, 45, 47, being "cast into hell [*Gehenna*]" is used as the antithesis to entering "into life" and entering "into the kingdom" (two terms for the same thing). And it is so with all the other occurrences of this word in the gospel accounts.

Gehenna in James 3:6 is the only exception to the previous in the New Testament and the only place where this word is used outside the gospel accounts. In James 3:6, the word is used in a symbolic sense,

dealing with the tongue. But, even here, in a book dealing specifically with the salvation of the soul (James 1:21; 5:19, 20), the word has an inseparable connection with the way it is used in the gospel accounts.

Thus, there is no instance where the usage of being "cast into *Gehenna*" is used as a reference to the unsaved being cast into "the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14, 15), as is often taught. *Gehenna* is associated with the judgment of a select group – those to whom the offer of the kingdom of the heavens is extended. The word is thus associated with *the future judgment of Christians in connection with issues surrounding the millennial kingdom*.

Therefore, when the word "Gehenna" is used, it is used as the temporary destination of all of God's disobedient - but saved - children. THIS IS THE OUTER DARKNESS.

Disobedient Christians are depicted throughout the gospels as being cast into Outer Darkness, or into Gehenna. There is no valid basis to assume that these are two different locations.

The Worm and the Fire

Several verses connected with Gehenna refer to the worm that does not die, and the fire that is never quenched; for example:

Mark 9:43-44

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Here again is an example of the unfortunate mis-use in translating the word "never" in the Bible. This was discussed at great length in Chapter Eleven. The phrase "never shall be quenched" is the Greek word *asbestos* (Strong's 762) which means "not to be quenched" or "unquenchable" (Mat. 3:12, Mar 9:43, 45, Luke 3:17). The element of *time* (as in "never") is not in view; what is in view is that the fire is "not to be quenched" for this period of 1,000 years. It is correctly translated in vs. 44 as *"the fire is not quenched"*.

Likewise, it is also true that the worm will not die during this period.

However, at the end of the millennium, all those in Gehenna will be restored to life when their sentences are up.

Matthew 5:25-26

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. 26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, TILL thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

To escape my conclusions in this matter of Gehenna and the Outer Darkness, perhaps some will reply that the Gehenna warnings to the Pharisees in passages such as Matthew 23 are *postmillennial* and must therefore refer to the final Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15). Yet, this cannot be true since the warnings regarding Gehenna are directly contrasted with life in the millennial kingdom (Matthew 5:20, 22, 18:3, 9,

Mark 9:47). It should be remembered that the next "kingdom" to come is the millennium (Matt. 6:10, Rev. 20:6, 7, 1Cor. 15:23-26).

The Outer Darkness, or Gehenna, is a place of future disciplinary punishment with a view to restoration for saved saints who did not obey God. The punishment will vary ("few stripes" verses "many stripes".) Just being sentenced to this place may be all the punishment required for certain individuals – much as we punish our children by telling them "go to your room". This place is also known as Gehenna. The prison term is limited to "*till the uttermost farthing*" has been paid. Only blasphemy of the Spirit cannot be forgiven in this age or in the next (the Millennial) age (Mat. 12:32).

The purpose of Gehenna is to sanctify those unfaithful Christians who, because of disobedience and lack of cooperation, did not allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify them through the Word of God. This sanctification is a necessary prerequisite to entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Because they were unsanctified in this life, it is necessary that they be sanctified in the next age. So Gehenna is a temporary place of remedial suffering designed to bring the Christian to his ultimate sanctification, or Salvation of the Soul, where he can then be resurrected in a glorified body at the end of the 1,000 years. This involves fire, and obviously some sentences are harsher than others:

Luke 12:47-48

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.

This fire of Gehenna is what is meant by that vastly misunderstood verse concerning the Judgment Seat:

1 Corinthians 3:15

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

The fire above is the fire of Gehenna. Notice that the Christian is saved by this fire (Salvation of the Soul). The phrase "saved, yet so as by fire" should be understood as "saved by - through the agency of - this fire".

Again, notice the term "suffer loss". This is the exact wording used in several verses:

1 Corinthians 3:15

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Luke 9:25

For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

Matthew 16:26

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Of course, we have shown that the opposite of "lose his own soul" is "Salvation of the Soul".

There is what I believe is a description of Gehenna in the Old Testament in the prophecy in very last verse in Isaiah:

Isaiah 66:23-24

And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

First of all, Jesus used this very same description of Gehenna: *for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched;*

Mark 9:43-44

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

I believe this is a description of Gehenna. It is located outside the city of Jerusalem, which was the location of Gehenna in the time of Jesus. Isaiah describes these as coming before God to worship, and this would have to be at the physical location of Jesus in the millennium – in Jerusalem, on His throne of glory. After worship, then they would go forth (outside Jerusalem) where they can apparently observe "*the carcasses of men that have transgressed against me.*" I don't believe these are the lost dead. The lost dead would be in Hades (in the unsaved compartment), awaiting the Great White Throne Judgment. And lost dead unbelievers could not be physically observed from the surface of the earth just outside Jerusalem. Apparently those *men that have transgressed against me* are unfaithful, born again Christians. Are believers ever described as thus? Certainly, Hosea speaks of the redeemed:

Hosea 7:13

Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.

Isaiah Chapters 65 and 66 seem to switch back and forth from describing events in the millennium and events in eternity. For example, the below should refer to eternity:

Isaiah 65:17

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

We know from Rev. 21:1 that the new heavens and the new earth are created at the end of millennium. Yet, some of these verses describe the millennium:

Isaiah 65:20

There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

Since there will be no death in eternity, the above verse must describe the millennium. And apparently, a sinner has until 100 years old to be born again; after that, he is accursed, and apparently his life is taken.

The word Gehenna is derived from the Hebrew "Valley of Hinnom." Several verses hint that this fiery region of Gehenna is located just outside Jerusalem:

Jeremiah 7:31

And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.

Isaiah 30:33

For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Isaiah 14:9

Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

Fire is always seen in connection with the chastening of the unfaithful believers who forfeit the Kingdom of Heaven. For example, consider John 15:6 –

John 15:6

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

The man described above as "abiding not in me", is obviously a Christian, because only Christians can "remain, dwell, continue" (abide) in Christ in the first place. In order to not remain in the vine, one must have been in the vine in the first place. So this unfaithful believer is chastened with fire.

Then Hebrews 6:8 addresses the same thing:

Hebrews 6:7-8

For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

In this verse God sends rain upon the earth. One of two things happens: either the earth brings forth fruit and is blessed by God, or it brings forth thorns and briers, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. But we must remember, the burning in this picture is only temporary, and after the thorns and briers (and their seeds) are burned, then the land will be suitable once again. Thus it is with the believer:

he is chastened with fire for the purpose of ultimately restoring him. So again, the unfaithful believer is "burned" in some sense.

And then consider this passage in Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:26-31

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Here we have a "fiery indignation" that awaits the unfaithful believer when God judges HIS people. So fire is a clear, consistent theme when it comes to the chastening of the unwise, unfaithful believers and certainly fits with the imagery of Gehenna that Christ uses throughout the gospels.

For those who still can't imagine such a treatment of believers, remember what the warning Jesus gave in Revelation:

Revelation 3:19

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Therefore, I conclude that Gehenna is a section of Hades; at the coming of the Lord it rises up to the surface of the earth, where the occupants therein can be observed with the physical eye. It is also called as the Outer Darkness. It is called "outer" because it is "outside" the city of Jerusalem, and it is called "darkness" because it is in a place of obscurity away from the glory and light of the Lord in His temple in Jerusalem. But the occupants of Gehenna will be redeemed Christians who failed to qualify at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

And there will be much weeping and gnashing of teeth when they learn of their destination.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Warning – Danger Ahead

The First Warning

Hebrews 2:1-3

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. 2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; 3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

This warning was examined in Chapter Five, and I will expand upon it here. God gives us several warnings in the book of Hebrews to not turn our backs on this "so Great Salvation". The above text gives us the first of these warnings. In this passage God says:

- (1) We ought to pay more serious attention to all the truths that embody this Great Salvation.
- (2) Don't let them slip away (lit., as "a leaking vessel") (vs. 1).
- (3) Don't neglect them (which means not to be careless; not to show reckless unconcern).
- (4) Finally, He warns that we shall not escape (the penalties at the Judgment Seat of Christ) if we fail in this. But rather, we will suffer the exact and just recompense of reward (Heb. 2:2-3), which literally means receiving exactly what we deserve.

In view of the high realm where this property is situated - in heaven - and in view of its noble qualities, and of its glowing contrast with the dismal prospects of men before they become children and heirs of God, this salvation may well be called *great*. Indeed, it is the greatest thing that God can ever design or grant; for its essence is the sharing in the relationship of son to the eternal Father (2:10; 2Cor. 6:17, 18; Rev. 21:7); and it includes external conformity of our bodies to that of the glorified Son of God (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:1-3), coheirship with Him of this world (Rom. 8:14-17; 1Cor. 3:21-23), co-regency with Him as its Sovereign and Blessor (Luke 22:28-30; Rev. 2:26-28; 3:21), and co-residence with Him in the heavenly habitation (John 14:1-3; 1Thess. 4:16-18; Rev. 7:15; 14:1; 15:2-4).

It is noteworthy that this "Great Salvation" (elsewhere described as Salvation of the Soul, or the Word of the Kingdom) had never been preached before the Lord introduced it (vs. 3). This excludes from the meaning here that present aspect of salvation which consists of the forgiveness of sins, justification, and the new birth unto eternal life; for though the Lord Jesus did indeed speak of these initial, indispensable, and immeasurable benefits, He was by no means the first to announce these. To go back earlier, Moses in the law, fourteen centuries before Christ, had conveyed to Israel the divine assurance of forgiveness, e.g. Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 16, 18. A thousand years before Christ, David rejoiced in that free forgiveness (Psa. 32). Christ confirmed this earlier message of mercy, declaring that the repentant confessing sinner,

who sought mercy on the ground of the propitiatory sacrifice, "went down to his house justified" (Luke 18:14); but He was not the first so to teach on earth.

It is not here on earth that this salvation is so great: salvation in its lesser range than this is indeed great ("megas"); but the adjective used here is rare in the New Testament, and very emphatic. "Tilihoutos" means "so great." Its only other places are: Jas. 3:4; the ship that is *so great* as compared with its small rudder; 2Cor. 1:10; "*so great* a death" as threatened Paul in Asia, something more terrible than men ordinarily face; and Rev. 16:18; where the full force of the word is seen by its describing "*so great* an earthquake, so violent ("megas"), such as was not seen since there were men upon the earth."

Thus the point in our passage is that the future salvation in view is something as wholly unexampled as was that earthquake. It is not that "common salvation" in which all the saved must share, but it is that highest height and splendor of glory to which the God of all grace is in this age calling us in Christ, even "*unto His eternal glory*" (1 Pet. 5:10); even "*into His own kingdom and glory*" (1 Thess. 2:12); so that such shall obtain nothing less than "*the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Thess. 2:14), and be part of that company which, under the figure of a city, is seen by John as coming down out of heaven "*having the glory of God*" (Rev. 21:11).

It does not demand unusual wonders and signs to assure repentant men of the pardon of a gracious God. King David, the tax-gatherer, the woman that was a sinner, and millions more, of old and of today, have obtained the bliss of justification by believing the bare word of God. But the proposal that men should be elevated bodily from earth, man's natural home, to the heavens above - that we should share the glory of God Himself, and the sovereignty of the world with the Son of God - this was so startling, so unimaginable, that God confirmed it as *His* message by exceptional signs, wonders, various powerful workings, and especially by distributions of His own Spirit, without Whose in-working aid it would scarcely be possible to grasp the proposal, much less think it credible.

How Could We Then Neglect So Great A Salvation?

The danger is that we may drift away from these things heard. In our passage the danger in view may be compared to a ship being caught by wind and tide, and through negligence being thus carried past the desired haven. In this case the sailors will pay the penalty of missing the profits, comforts, and pleasures expected in port, and may also be exposed to further perils of the sea.

The warning is given by a comparison. The message of God given through angels at Sinai (Acts 7:53) took effect. Its solemn sanctions against willful transgression and careless disobedience were enforced. The history of Israel demonstrates this through over 3,000 years. The Messenger Who has been sent to us this time is far nobler in rank; the message is far richer in content: how, then, shall we escape if we neglect Him *and* the message?

The word "neglect" is important. It is found in three other places. At Hebrews 8:9 it is said that the Lord disregarded Israel because they turned away from Him. If one party violates a conditional covenant, the other party may treat it as null and void. This God did, deliberately and definitely, as the aorist tense here intimates. This shows that the word "neglect" involves deliberate action, not mere inadvertence. We are warned lest we with intention, even more than by carelessness, disregard this so great salvation offered to us as children of God. It is not here the *sinner* being indifferent to the first aspect of salvation, nor the unwatchful, prayerless *Christian* falling before common temptations (though such indifference will

assuredly bring its penalties); but it is the *believer* putting from his mind the final privileges offered. This is seen in Chapter 12 in Esau despising his birthright privileges.

1 Timothy 4:14

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

Here the imperfect tense stresses the continuousness of the neglect. If we once turn from the hope of the gospel, the hope of this "great salvation", the attitude may easily become permanent.

Matthew 22:5

But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

"*But they made light of it*", and went off about their personal affairs. Made light of what? Of a royal invitation to a royal wedding! Here the tense of the verb is the same as in our passage, which illuminates the latter. They deliberately disregarded the invitation, made light of the King and His Son, and showed they preferred common earthly interests. This was precisely the sin of Esau: choosing a meal instead of his birthright.

The Penalty

"*How shall we escape*" - escape what? Obviously it is that "*just recompense of reward*" mentioned immediately before, such as followed under the law spoken through angels. The same analogy and warning will be enlarged in Heb. 10:26-31. "Misthos", the root of the word used, means wages for work done: "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7; 1 Tim. 5:18; Jas. 5:4), and is used frequently of the reward the godly shall receive in heaven (Matt. 5:12; Luke 6:23; 1Cor. 3:8; Rev. 22:12). The derived word in our passage, "misthapodosis" is peculiar to our Writer, being found elsewhere only at 10:35 and 11:26, with the cognate "misthapodotes" at 11:6 only. The force of the compound word is "to give back an equivalent", hence a "just recompense".

Oh, let this be grasped. God is a Rewarder of them that seek after Him (11:6). He gives back according to the earnestness and faith of the seeker. It was by paying regard to the day of Christ, and the reward then to become available, that Moses was strengthened to abandon the honors and prospects of the royal house of Egypt (11:26). Men of this world have their portion in this life (Psa. 17:14; Matt. 6:2, 5, 16); the prospects of the disciple of Christ lie where Christ's prospects lie: in the future; they are known by faith and hope. It is for us to be courageous and bold as was Moses, for this will "*receive great recompense of reward*" (10:35).

The word recompense is a good translation. It means to make the scales even, to give back in goods the exact value received. The day of Christ will be a period of the administration of justice, and rewards will be strictly equivalent to service and suffering now. *So also will be the penalty attached to neglect by the Christian of the high privileges possible to be attained by faith.* (The Apostle Paul had no assurance [at the time of his writing below] that he had yet attained this high station for which he had been apprehended of Christ):

Philippians 3:12

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

One scholar has written that the word *misthapodosia* "appears to emphasize the idea of an exact requital of good or evil by a sovereign Judge." Another translates it as "exact requital", or "just retribution": We should face this seriously, for it is a somber prospect for the carnal believer. Something of what this retribution may mean will be elaborated upon in the later warnings. In this first and brief warning, we see a concentration of the basic elements of privilege, and our responsibility concerning that privilege.

The Second Warning

Hebrews 3:6

But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

The House of God

A house is a building where a person dwells and can be found. God, being spirit, dwells in a spirit dwelling, and especially in and among living persons, manifesting Himself to and in their spirits, causing them to display His own glory and His holiness. A material dwelling is not essential to such a dwelling of God on earth (Acts 7:47-50). Such a structure as a tabernacle or temple is actually a condescension to man's limited ability to recognize God as at hand in spirit. In the finally perfected conditions of heaven there will be no temple (Rev. 21:22).

God intended at the first that it should be thus with Israel. "*When Israel went forth out of Egypt . . . Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion*" (Psa. 114:1, 2). The earthly building was but a visible exhibition of the existing spiritual reality - the presence of God: it did not create the latter, but merely displayed it to the eye.

1 Timothy 3:15

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The Church of God is now to be such a structure: "*that thou mayest know how it behooves us to behave in the house of God*"; i.e., it is the responsibility of God's people, singly and unitedly, to exhibit and maintain before men the truth concerning God and His Son, and to demonstrate His presence among His people. One instance of this dwelling of God with His church is that, when Christians are together, and their worship and teaching are ordered and energized by the Spirit of God, the unbeliever will be constrained to exclaim, "*God is among you indeed*" (1Cor. 14:24, 25). This is a severe test of the actual spiritual state of a church.

This figure of a house is the first and chief figure that teaches the privileges attaching to association with the Son of God; as He said: "*On this the rock [the truth of His own Messiah-ship and Deity confessed] I will build My church*" (Matt. 16:18). It was employed frequently by Christ and the apostles (Luke 12:35-48 Matt. 24:45-51. Eph. 2:19-21; etc.). It is our loss when this first and primary figure of a "building" is neglected and the figure of the "body" is overstressed (as if it expresses all truth as to relationship with Christ.)

Please observe that "house" often merges into and means "household" - the inhabitants rather than the structure. Thus Nathan said to David, "*Jehovah will make thee a house*" (2 Sam. 7:11); and so in Eph. 2

cited: *"ye are of the household of God."* Over this household the Son of God is the sole Ruler (vs. 6). In this sphere He alone holds rights direct from the Father of the family: all lesser authority (as, e.g. of elders) is derived from the Son, and is to be exercised strictly according to His directions, without variation caused by human opinion or preference (see 8:5). This is a very important matter in which faithfulness is required from His servants, and far too seldom is this found in the Church. Man's desires and ideas have largely ousted the rule of the Son as Head over God's house, not only wronging Him, but also ruining the house.

In the times of the Old Testament, Moses acted for God in the capacity of chief servant, but Jesus now acts as Son over the Father's household. Moses dealt with things then present as illustrations in advance of nobler things to follow (Heb 3:5): Christ has now introduced those higher and heavenly arrangements, and will duly bring them to eternal completion. How blessed to be dutiful and faithful and to walk in this divine sphere, rather than to turn back to the earthly, imperfect, and transitory foreshadowings of it. Yet Christendom has largely done this, by its resumption of the visible and fleshly in worship, and in the arrangements for what it calls God's house. Stately edifices, elaborate ceremonies, splendid vestments, a caste of priests or ministers, altars, sacrifices, incense, music - what is all this but a lapse back from the heavenly and spiritual to the elements and weakness of the Mosaic and external which Christ abrogated (John 4:19-24)? It was against this that Jesus uttered His warnings and appeals: would that they had been generally heeded, and that the household had held fast to the Head of the house.

Whose House Are We IF

(1) Judah as God's Sanctuary

Writing from the distance of many centuries the psalmist here cited could say that it was *"when Israel went forth out of Egypt"* that *"Judah became His sanctuary."* Yet in fact this was not so until a whole year after they left Egypt (Exo. 40:17). It was not till the first day in the second year that the tabernacle was raised up and God descended to dwell among them. This is seen in three further particulars: (a) that to meet God Moses had to ascend the mount (Exo. 19:20, etc.): (b) that the earlier tent, where Moses alone met God face to face, was beyond the limits of the camp (Exo. 33:7-11) (these audiences were occasional, and the cloud, the sign of the presence of God, descended on those occasions). (c) It was on the summit of Sinai that God said to Moses *"Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them"* (Exo. 25:8).

(2) Redemption and Baptism Necessary but Inadequate

Therefore, considering the above type, redemption and baptism (both of which Israel had partaken in type (1Cor. 10:1-4) do not by themselves assure the indwelling of God in a believer. The first disciples were sincere believers in Christ, devoted to Him, and used in service, long before Pentecost. Compare also Acts 8:4-17; 19:1-6. The case of Cornelius and his friends shows that the indwelling may take place at the very moment of first faith in Christ (Acts 10:44-48); other instances show that it may come later. But until that indwelling at Pentecost, the first Christians, though regenerate, were not yet a house unto God, and until an individual believer is so indwelled neither is he.

(3) Israel Nearly Missed This Honor

Israel only narrowly escaped the entire forfeiture of the privilege of becoming a house unto God. Because of their sin in making the golden calf, God said (Exo. 33:2), *"I will send an angel before thee... for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people; lest I consume thee in the way."* But

Moses felt that no angel could afford him sufficient support for his heavy responsibilities, and he argued the case before God until the promise was given, "*My presence shall go [i.e. in the midst of the people, see vs. 3], and I will give thee rest*" (Exo. 33:12-16), that is, while still carrying his load.

(4) Israel Twice Lost the Honor

God continued to dwell with Israel until, in their blindness and carnality, they trusted in the *symbol* of His local presence - the ark of the covenant - and not in Himself; whereupon, suffering them to take their own course, "*He delivered His strength into captivity*" by the Philistines, and "*forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh*" (1 Sam. 4; Psa. 78:60-62; Jer. 7:12). From that time forward, He was not in their midst, and consequently *they ceased to be to Him a house*. It was so for just over a hundred years until He graciously descended in glory to Solomon's temple. Here He dwelled until the wickedness of His people caused Him to abandon that house also and give it up to destruction by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek. 10:18, 19; 11:23). Never since has God dwelled among Israel or have they been His house, for the Glory did not return to the second temple.

(5) Applications to Ourselves

Thus the type shows that *the indwelling of God may be withdrawn*. It had not been possible for the Chaldeans to destroy the temple while the God of glory was there. It had not been possible for Satan to destroy the bodies of the wicked brethren at Corinth while the Spirit of God was indwelling them as His sanctuary (1Cor. 5:3-5; 11:30). An assembly also may corporately forfeit the presence of the Lord and cease to be His sanctuary. Thus the Lord declared Himself to be outside of the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:20).

Surely you cannot fairly doubt that this corresponds to pertinent facts and explains them: there are men once used much by God as His servants, once so filled with His Spirit that men came into contact with God in them, but upon whom for long years "Ichabod" has been plainly written, The glory is departed! There are Sardian churches of whom it is sadly true that they have a name to live and are really dead (Rev. 3:1). But if they are dead, *then the Spirit of life cannot be in them*. It is spiritual folly to maintain a theory against facts. Wisdom admits the facts and accepts the remedies (Rev. 3:3, 18, 20).

Every believer might be indwelt by the Spirit of God, but not every believer is; every believer might know this indwelling to the end of life, but not every believer does. And hence the powerful warning before us: "*Whose house are we [emphatic] IF the boldness and the boasting of the hope [of sharing the glory of God; see Rom. 5:2] steadfast unto the end we should hold fast.*" The aorist subjunctive used – "kataschomen" - regards the holding fast as one continuous act completed at the end of each life, and the verb takes emphasis at the close of the sentence. "If" with the subjunctive declares a condition. Our being to God as a dwelling place depends upon steadfastness of hope and of witness to that hope. Similarly, Col. 1:22-23 lays down that our being "presented before" the Lord, "holy and without blemish and unprovable", depends upon the same steadfastness:

Colossians 1:22-23

In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: 23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

By the third century the *hope* of the gospel had been too generally abandoned - though they still professed the *faith* - they avowed salvation to come through Christ and His death - but had given up on His return as the true hope of the Christian. As a result, many who named the Name readily accepted the proposal of the world to become the official State religion, and the presence and power of God in the churches that did so soon ceased. From that day until now, it has been the minority that have confessed the hope and walked in Abraham's path as a stranger among the peoples; and always it has been among such that the spiritual glory of God has been displayed.

Israel and we may remain the people of God – they are beloved still for the Father's sake, and we are for Christ's sake - yet cease to be to God for a house, a dwelling place. As we have seen, the tabernacle and temple are used in the New Testament as types of the believer and the church; but it is for us to benefit by the *whole* typical history, its course and conclusion - not only its glorious commencement - and to profit by its warnings as well as its comfort.

As regards the church of this age and its testimony, it began with Pentecost, but it will end with apostasy (Matt. 24:12; 2Thess. 2:1-3; 1Tim. 4:1-3). The grave peril is that we may "*fall from our own steadfastness*" (2Pet. 3:17). Whether a Christian will reach the glory and rule the nations depends upon whether he overcomes and keeps the Lord's works "*unto the end*" (Matt. 24:13; Rev. 2:26). Salvation from Hell is most assuredly without works (Rom. 4:1-8), and to teach otherwise is to falsify the gospel. But it is equally definite that ruling with Christ depends on works, as Rev. 2:26 states, and to teach otherwise is to falsify our hope by putting it on a false basis.

Revelation 2:26

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Here it is *faithfulness* that matters, in us, as it was in Moses and in Christ. This gives a special meaning to several verses. Jesus clearly said that the condition for the Father and He to "*come unto him, and make our abode with him*" was *obedience* to His Word.

John 14:23

Jesus answered and said unto him, IF a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Notice in the above verse that "*make our abode with him*" is conditioned upon obedience ("*keep my words*"). The verse says that both the Son ("we") and the Father (*Spirit of God*) will come unto him.

Romans 8:9

*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Notice the opposite to "*none of His*" is "*they that are Christ's*.")*

Galatians 5:24

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

If the Father and the Son coming to abide in a man are conditioned upon obedience, then it follows that prolonged disobedience will cause their departure – which is exactly what happened to the Israelites.

John 10:27

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

Notice that all the above verses are conditional. Most Christians are taught that we are all His sheep, but Christ says otherwise. If a Christian is not following the Lord, Jesus said they are not His ("*My sheep*"). There are qualifications to being His – that the Christian should follow Him in obedience; this leads to the crucifixion of the flesh with its affections and lusts.

The Third Warning

Hebrews 3:14

For we are made partakers of Christ, IF we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

The term "partaker of Christ" can be translated as "Messiah's companions". Moses had his personal attendant, Joshua. David had the "king's friend", Hushai (1Chron. 27:33). Rehoboam had "the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him" (2Chron. 10:8). The Lord in His kingdom will have those who "walk about with Him in white", arrayed thus in white garments *then* because they overcame *now* in the battle with sin and did not defile their garments here (Rev. 3:4-5). They are "*the called and chosen and faithful*" (Rev. 17:14). *It is faithfulness that matters* (1Cor. 4:2)/

Jesus said to the little band who, in spite of their failures, had gone through with their Teacher and Lord to the end: "*I will come again, and will receive you unto Myself, that where I am ye may be also*" (John 14:3). He had said before:

John 12:26

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

In our complacency we make this to read, "If any one believes on Christ as Saviour, he shall be with Christ and be honored by the Father". But the Lord said that companionship with Himself, and being honored by the Father, results from *serving and following*. And the context is that following Christ involves being a corn of wheat that dies to itself that it may live in others. Therefore, let the believer ask: Whose interests am I serving: Christ's or my own - Christ's or those of this world? Whose maxims, whose example, whose ambitions and ends do I follow: those of Christ, or of others? In the nature of the case only one who literally follows the steps of another can arrive where that other arrives. Another path will lead to another place.

The absolute summit of the Christian's true ambition is the immediate presence and continual company of the Son of God in glory. The honor and bliss of this is elsewhere pictured as the mutual joy of bridegroom and bride.

Elsewhere this dignity is set forth as sitting with the King on the royal dais at a banquet (Luke 22:30), and again, as sharing His throne (Rev. 3:21). In all such relationships the dominant thought is that of sharing habitually the *personal company* of the Lord. And this is the distinctive element in the word *companions*, i.e., being habitually in the company of one another; and it is equally the distinctive thought of the word thus translated - *metochos*.

Too many Christians are content to have a share in the "common salvation", and show little desire or care to enjoy the company of the Lord or of their fellow-partners. Shall such indifference here in this age lead to intimacy in the next age? No! Heb. 1:9, using the same word, speaks of the Lord having *companions*; our present verse (3:14) declares that "*companions* [emphatic] of the Christ [the Messiah] we have become *if at least [eanper]* the beginning of the assurance unto the end steadfast we may hold." We "*have become*" such companions as regards the calling and purpose of God, and we may enjoy this privilege already in heart fellowship with Christ: we *shall* become such in outward and visible and glorified reality IF we are steadfast unto the end of our course. It is reaching well *the end* of the race that matters as to gaining the prize. He who fails in staying power, and does not reach the goal, does not lose his salvation, but he *does* lose the prize. It will be truly wonderful to be in the kingdom of the saved: it will be far, far more to be a companion of the King. Ponder this second IF!

Moreover, the verse states that we must "*hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end*". The Greek word "stedfast" means "firm, of force, or sure". The "beginning of our confidence" is the same thought expressed in the verse we studied under the Second Warning; the word "stedfast" here is translated "firm":

Hebrews 3:6

But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope [of ruling and reigning with Him] firm unto the end.

That a Christian can be in danger of losing this stedfastness can be seen in 2 Peter:

2 Peter 3:17

Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

The Fourth Warning

Hebrews 3:12, 19

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.... 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Nothing is clearer than that every redeemed Israelite that left Egypt had a right to enter Canaan. The purposes and promises of God were universal to them as sons of Abraham. Their title was beyond question. Yet nothing is plainer than that of the 600,000 adult men who left Egypt only two, Joshua and Caleb, did in fact enter Canaan. The histories of this failure are narrated with significant fullness (Num. 13 and 14). The grounds of failure and of success are stated with unmistakable distinctness. The later references to it are striking and solemn. Psalms 95 impressed it upon Israel; Hebrews 3 and 4 impress it upon us; and the detailed use of the failure in 1 Corinthians 10 emphasizes that *the warning is fully applicable to Christians*.

That Canaan must be *won* is as certain as that it may be lost. That the promised power of God was adequate and available to enable them all to take possession was no guarantee that they would get possession. In the cases of the few who did so, the praise belonged to their God of grace Who gave them the victory (Psalms 44:3). That the majority did not reach the land was, as we are here told, because of unbelief and disobedience.

What is the antitype of Canaan for the Christian? Whatever it is will have three dominant features:

- (1) The privilege to run the race is a gift of covenant grace, and therefore undeserved.
- (2) It must be won by conflict. No more is possessed than that the warrior sets his foot upon (Josh. 1:3; Acts 14:22).
- (3) It may be lost by distrust of God and disobedience to His commands.

The two last particulars show that neither justification nor eternal life is in view, for these are described plainly as free gifts (Rom. 3:24; 6:23). "Free" (*dorean, charisma*) means free of conditions, what is termed in law an absolute gift, as distinct from a conditional gift; "free" is a gift which therefore can neither be withdrawn by the donor nor forfeited by the receiver.

What, then, does Canaan represent today? A careful examination of the records will show that the whole national history of Israel, from redemption in Egypt to Solomon, is one continuous type.

Slavery in Egypt is Rom. 1 and 2: redemption by blood is Rom. 3 to 5: freedom from Egypt, by passing through the Red Sea, is Rom. 6, baptism into fellowship with Christ in His death and risen life: the wilderness is Rom. 7: the crossing the Jordan is Rom. 8:1-17, experiential transference from being "in flesh" (the wilderness) to being "in spirit" (the land of promise), and thus becoming free from bondage and its fear, even as Israel lost the reproach of having been a slave race by being circumcised at Gilgal, at the entrance of the land. This leads to Rom. 8:15-16, the joy of adoption and communion, so as to become heirs of the goodly land thus reached. This in turn involves suffering with Christ (Rom. 8:17-18), as Israel in the land shared with Joshua the sufferings of the wars of possession. The history of the book of Judges pictures the groaning and travailing of the church of God not yet perfected (Rom. 8:22-23), in which experiences there develop the still remaining weaknesses and failures of our mortal state, and in which the power of the hope of perfect possession and rest supports the godly (Rom. 8:24-25).

For the Christian, this hope is to be realized at the "redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23). Thus the sequence of thought has reached the Second Coming of our Lord. Now His own final word is that at His advent He will come as "*the root and offspring of David*" (Rev. 22:16); that is to say, that David in his rejection, hardships, and wars was a type of Christ, now rejected and hidden, but whose public appearing will secure victory over Satan, with liberation for the earth, and glory for those who fought and suffered with Him. Thus did David's return to public life free Israel from the Philistine oppression and bring to glory in his kingdom the men who had shared his rejection.

But Rom. 8:19-21 adds the important feature that at that appearing of our now absent Lord, with the many sons who by then will have been brought unto glory, there is to be a releasing of creation itself from its pains and groans. Previous prophecies had foretold this, as Psa. 72:16; Isa. 11:6-9; 30:23-26; 55:12, 13; etc. In other words the period we have now reached in this line of thought is the millennial reign of Christ, the Prince of peace, the foreshadowing of which was the earlier part of Solomon's reign of peace and glory. But failure marked the close of that period, and failure will mark the close of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-10); whereupon will follow a final judgment and final reconstruction of heaven and earth in a new and eternal order.

Thus Canaan as a type does not extend beyond the days of Solomon, and therefore is not a picture of things eternal, but of two things: (1) of the present era of spiritual conflict as in *Joshua* and *Judges* and in Eph. 6. In this experience rich knowledge is gained of the power and goodness of God, but it is accompanied with groaning; but (2), and more fully, Canaan prefigured that millennial period, the era upon which hope is called to fix itself, even upon "*the favor that is being brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (1 Pet. 1:13).

Seeing then that failure and sorrow marked Canaan through the whole past, it cannot be a type of the eternal ages, for these will never be marred by failure. It follows that it is the millennial glory which must be won and may be lost - won by faith that obeys, lost by distrust and disobedience.

The Fifth Warning

Hebrews 4:9

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

Hebrews 4:1

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

(1) Restfulness of nature is an essential quality of God. A restless, anxious being could not be God. This eternal quietness of spirit results from omnipotence. The consciousness of possessing entirely adequate resources prevents fear of contingencies; indeed, foreknowledge allows no contingencies.

(2) But rest of spirit is compatible with activity. When sin had disturbed the original order of creation (Gen. 1:2), God *acted*, became active, "*the Spirit of God moved*", and "*God said*", and thus set His energy in motion, and the reconditioning of heaven and earth was effected (Gen. 1).

(3) That was accomplished in six days, and on the seventh day "*God rested from all His work*" done in those six days (Gen. 2:2).

(4) But again sin wrought ruin (Gen. 3), and again God resumed activity to restore order through redemption and regeneration. This activity of God is still proceeding, even as the Son said here: "*My Father worketh even until now, and [therefore] I work*" (John 5:17). This working of God will continue until that day when the Son will take over the active government of heaven and earth. Until then the Father acts, even as He said to the Son, "*Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool*" (Psa. 110:1; Matt. 22:44; and in Heb. 1:13). This is another key word to the plans of God.

(5) When this end shall have been achieved, and the enemies of God and His Son have been subdued, then will God return unto His rest, as it is written: "*He will rest in His love*" (Zeph. 3:17). Now the time contemplated in this scripture is when Jerusalem is to be saved, Israel's captivity to be ended, and that people to be a joy unto Jehovah (vs. 14-20), and He Himself be dwelling in their midst. This supremacy of Christ and restoration of Israel is the beginning of the Millennium, which therefore is the era of God's rest, His sabbatism.

This is necessitated by the very word itself, for a *sabbath* rest is a rest that follows labor, and therefore cannot be that original, eternal rest of God mentioned in (1) above, for *that* rest *preceded* God's activities, is never disturbed, and is not a *sabbatismos*. Neither can the word intend the final epoch of new heavens

and earth. That will indeed be a rest after labor, but it will not be the hour when the Son will cease to sit at the right hand of the Father or the day when Israel will be restored nationally. These events usher in the millennial rest, not the eternal. God will rest when He shall have installed the Son again as the active Agent of the Godhead (Rev. 4 and 5). Thenceforth, throughout the Millennium, the Son will carry forward the purposes of the Father, and at its close will complete them by establishing new heavens and earth.

(6) It is evident that Joshua and Israel did not reach *this* rest. "*The land had rest from war*" (Josh. 2:23), but that rest was incomplete and was temporary, for the conquest of the land was incomplete (Judges 1). If that rest had been the rest of God spoken of in Num. 14, God would not have been heard several centuries later speaking again of His rest and offering it to men, as in Psa. 95. The conclusion is that therefore there still remains a sabbath rest for the people of God.

(7) But it is vital to recognize that this rest is *future* to present age. It is not that rest of conscience toward God which the soul gains by trusting in the sacrifice of Christ, nor is it that peace of mind which is promised concerning the trials of the desert way and which trust on God confers (Isa. 26:3, 4; Phil. 4:4-7). These are a blessed foretaste of the other, but are not the sabbath rest of God. For these are *our* rest in God, the other God calls *His own* rest, "My rest." This cannot mean rest of conscience or freedom from fear of foes or of tomorrow, because such distresses are wholly impossible to God.

The English Versions greatly obscure the meaning here by inserting a very small word, reading "we who have believed *do* enter into that rest" (vs. 3). The Greek says: "For enter into the rest we (or those) having believed." This last verb is an *aorist* participle, which shows, as the context here indicates, that the whole course of faith is viewed as a completed act of faith. The course is finished, the goal is reached, and faith has characterized the runner to the end.

This is more abundantly clear from vs. 10: "*For the one entering into His [God's] rest, also himself rested from his works as God did from His own works*", "Rested" is again an *aorist*, and signifies that the believer has labored and has reached once for all his rest. But this is precisely what no saint does while life on earth lasts. Now is our period of toil and conflict, and to us who are afflicted rest comes "*at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven*" (2 Thess. 1:7).

(8) It appears therefore that the full intent of God's solemn words to Israel in the wilderness meant more than that they should not enter Canaan at that time, but also that they should not share in that larger and more glorious era to which God was looking forward as to be His own rest, that is, the time and rule of Messiah. This need cause no surprise, for it is certain that both Abraham and Moses had been instructed as to that future era, even as Christ said: "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad*" (John 8:56); Now the period of the Lord's humiliation was not "His" day but part of man's day. The day of the Lord is the chief Old Testament term for His second coming and rule in glory.

Likewise, with Moses it was the prospect of reward in Messiah's day that strengthened him to bear the loss and reproach of espousing the cause of Messiah's people (11:25-26); and the close of his final prophecies shows how much he had been taught as to that era and that he passed on this knowledge to Israel (Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 32:35-43. 33:26-29).

It is clear that Israelites of like faith with Abraham were governed by like faith as to Messiah's day. This our Writer displays in Heb. 11. It is the great theme of all the prophets, and of them all Christ has said that they shall share in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also many from all lands; while many

of the "*children of the kingdom*", the natural heirs to it, shall forfeit that era through lack of faith (Matt. 8:10-12; Luke 13:28, 29). Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel are promised a share in that day as their reward for fidelity here (Zech. 3:6-10; Hag. 2:23). Daniel also (Dan. 12:13), as well as all who, like Abraham, have foregone this present world to lay up treasure in heaven (Matt. 19:21; Luke 18:22; and contexts), and have so acted as to secure their recompense at the resurrection of the righteous, the first resurrection (Luke 14:14).

(9) To the line of thought here being developed, concerning sharing or not sharing in the millennial kingdom, some may object that it will put the Christian under law as regards this prospect, and will negate grace. This is a misconception. The fact that Abraham and Moses lived in the light and power of Christ's day *before the law had been given at Sinai* shows the true grounds of their hope to have been independent of that law. The argument of Gal. 3:15-4:31 applies here. The law came in later for certain needful ends, but it did not affect the preceding covenant with Abraham. This latter included not only justification, but the promise of being "*heir of the world*" (Rom. 4:13) and so of sharing in the day of Messiah, for only then will all the families of the earth be blessed under the covenant of God with Abraham (Gen. 12:3).

Again, it was before Sinai that Moses accepted the reproach of Christ, looking on to His day for the reward.

Again, Joshua and Caleb reached that typical promised land, not because they were punctilious observers of the Levitical law, but on quite independent grounds. These were as follows (Num. 14:7-9; 13:30):

(a) They set a just value upon their inheritance: "*The land is an exceeding good land.*"

(b) They had a just confidence in God: "*If Jehovah delight in us, then He will bring us into this land.*"

(c) They had a just fear of the sin of rebelling against God: "*only rebel not against Jehovah.*"

(d) They had a just disregard of enemies and obstacles: "*neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is removed from over them [that is, their demon gods will prove powerless], and Jehovah is with us: fear them not... Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*"

By contrast, the rest of the men of war:

(a) "*despised the pleasant land*",

(b) did not believe God's word of promise to give them that land (Psa. 106:24), and "*believed not in His wondrous works*" (Psa. 78:32; Num. 14:11).

(c) They were rebellious from the Red Sea and onwards (Psa. 106:7), and at Kadesh Barnea they "*hearkened not unto the voice of Jehovah*" when He bade them to go up to the land (Psa. 106:7, 25): and

(d) in consequence of this lack of faith in God they were fearfully afraid of their foes. The question, therefore, as to getting their inheritance was their *heart attitude to that inheritance* and to

God Who had opened the way to it. And we see that through *that* disobedience, and through unbelief as to *that* promise, they were not able to enter in (3:18, 19).

(10) An all-inclusive fact and principle is stated in the inspired words: "*So then they that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham*" . . . *and if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise*" (Gal. 3:9, 29). All blessings, earthly and heavenly, to all men, Jews and Gentiles, flow through the covenant of grace God made with Abraham. But each who would inherit must exercise the faith of faithful Abraham (Rom. 4:12, 13), even the kind of faith that made him a pilgrim and alien as to this scene where men distrust their God.

This covenant is revocable as against the distrustful and rebellious of the children of Abraham. God had ratified that covenant with an oath; but upon the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea, God cancelled that oath by another oath to the contrary (Num. 14:23, 28; Ezek. 20:5, 6, 15). There is no inconsistency here on the part of God. To the covenant with Abraham that his seed should possess the land God had added a condition that they should be circumcised (Gen. 17). Now Rom. 2:28-29 shows that circumcision to be valid and effective must include circumcision of the heart, not merely of the flesh, and to be shown by a man keeping the law of God in spirit, not merely in the letter. These men who came out of Egypt did not fulfill this condition. Their rejection of Moses showed they were uncircumcised in heart, as were their later descendants who similarly crucified their Messiah (Acts 7:51). Ezek. 20 shows this at length. And therefore Moses said to the following generation: "*Circumcise therefore . . . your heart, and be no more stiff-necked*" (Deut. 10:16). It would be immoral for God to grant favors in disregard of morality in man. He cannot thus encourage sin in His people. God will gladly circumcise the heart, and by doing so make possible love and obedience; *but if we will not consent to this it cannot be done*, and then there will not be found in us the indispensable condition for inheriting the blessing.

The righteousness of Christ is necessary to *entitle* us to the kingdom of heaven, but personal holiness is necessary to *qualify* us for it. Without the former we could have no *claim* to glory; without the latter we could have no *fitness* for it.

In consequence, God said to the 600,000 "*ye shall know My alienation*", i.e., "*the revoking of My promise*", for though that promise was confirmed by an oath, it was limited by a condition (Num. 14:34). The word *alienation* is noteworthy. It comes elsewhere only in Job 33:10, where the afflicted saint expressed his misconception of God's ways by saying "*He findeth against me causes of alienation, He counteth me for His enemy.*" In Job's case that was pure misapprehension, but as to Israel in the wilderness, some seven centuries later, Isaiah said with sorrow that, in spite of God's most abundant mercy and care, "*they rebelled, and grieved His holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and Himself fought against them*" (Isa. 63:9, 10). What Job wrongly feared was his case, was actually in fact their case.

Thus their failure to reach both the typical rest and to secure the millennial rest is here solemnly urged upon us as both a *warning* and an *incentive*. It is not at all a question of them having been under law and we being under grace, for as regards the promised land, the rest of God, the heirship of the world, they were not heirs through Sinai but through Abraham, and through grace, as we also are and on the same terms and conditions, even that we must walk in the faith of our father Abraham.

The Practical Applications

(1). "*Harden not your hearts*" 3:8. The call of God ran counter to their inclinations. It was a clear command, "Go up"! But it threatened trouble and danger, which the weakness of unbelief could not face, so they hardened their wills against it. And concerning this God said: "this people *despise* Me . . . *tempt* Me *murmur* against Me ... *reject* the land . . . [they are] an *evil* congregation" (Num. 14:11, 22, 27, 31, 35). This is God's view of unbelief and disobedience.

(2). Are there not Christians who have distinctly heard the call of God to Go up! - up into a higher, richer spiritual life with Himself, and to devotion to His will and His cause among men, but for whom the cost seemed too high? The cost involved loss of friends, or marriage, or business prospects, and portion and honor in this world and, perhaps overt opposition was threatened with persecution and disgrace. Have not true children of God failed at such tests? Alas, I could narrate cases from personal knowledge.

Such turning back from the holy commandment involves a deliberate decision, a deliberate hardening of the will against God: this provokes Him to holy wrath, it greatly displeases Him (3:8-10); it is described in vs. 12 as "*apostasy from God, the living.*" Apostasy is to take up a different position from that formerly occupied. Faith adopts the attitude of obedience to God; rebellion is apostasy, the reverse attitude to faith, the contrary attitude to that of Abraham, Moses, and Christ, each of whom is described as *faithful*.

(3). This hardening of the heart results from the deceitfulness of sin (13). At such crises of apostasy the believer may beguile himself by most deceitful reasonings in his heart. He may say: I am saved from Hell, so other things are not of great consequence! Or, I am a subject of sovereign grace; therefore these fearful warnings *cannot* apply to me, but must refer to the unsaved! Or, I belong to the body of Christ, and I *must* share in the first resurrection or His body would be incomplete! Or, God is not a stern taskmaster, but a loving Father; He will not think too harshly of His child for loving the pleasant things of time: indeed, are they not His own gifts for my enjoyment? Or, the letter kills; it is the spirit that matters, so I need not pay too strict obedience to the letter of Scripture!

Or he might say, but quite good people act as I propose to do: indeed, Joshua and Caleb are a negligible minority! Or, if I take the course I wish - if I marry an unsaved partner, or if I enter a business partnership with such, I may win him or her for Christ! Or, if I make money and grow rich, I can do much good with it! Or, I can use a high position in this world to promote morality!

Ah, as it is written:

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

By all such specious deceits (they are more specious because in part they are *perverted* truths) the heart is hardened, the rebellious spirit is confirmed and may reach permanence, until the believer risks the solemn sentence "*They shall not enter into My rest*", but shall die in the wilderness; they shall never pass from Rom. 7 into Rom. 8! For it is only "*if so be that we suffer with Christ that we shall be glorified with Him*" (Rom. 8:17). The spiritual desert is strewn with spiritual skeletons. The all-knowing God knows that they are those of His faithless children, and at last (after the Millennium) the Spirit of life shall breathe into them resurrection energy unto eternal life (John 5:28, 29; 6: 39, 40, "*I will raise him up at the last day*"; Rev. 20:5); but such will have missed the "rest of God", to their permanent loss.

(4). Therefore the urgent word of Psa. 95, "To-day", is repeated in our passage no less than five times (3:7, 13, 15; 4:7, twice). Today! Give immediate attention; render instant obedience to the call of God to go forward. Do this today *"IF ye shall hear His voice"* offering to you this noble prospect. Should you harden your heart perhaps He will not again give the call, or perchance you may have become dull of hearing (5:11) and may not hear His voice; but if you do hear it, oh, give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience (4:11). We, as they, have had good tidings preached unto us; let each see to it that the message enters an honest and good heart, there to be mixed with faith, the faith that at once obeys the call, otherwise that word will be but as indigestible food which does not profit the receiver; moreover, let it be our care to unite at once by faith with that minority who have preceded us in giving to God full obedience and confidence as was illustrated in the Hall of Faith of Heb. 11.

Let us be encouraged by the fact that we shall join the minority. The sabbath rest remains, the offer is open still: if it should be repeated to you personally, then oh, give diligence! (Compare 2 Pet. 1:5-11, especially 5 and 10.)

(5). Heb. 4:12-13. Obedience to the Word of God is the crucial matter. God is the living God, not a dead or quiescent Being. No man can ignore him with impunity, not even His children. He has living energy; power to succor and power to punish. His word likewise is a living word; it is never obsolete, inoperative, ineffective, or a dead letter. It is active, two-edged, pointed; it cuts, it pierces, it dissects. Blessed are they who welcome its surgery, for it promotes health; miserable is he who resists its point and edge. For if the words of a sinful mortal can be sharp as a two-edged sword (Pro. 5:4), how much more those of the sin-hating God.

This word of God enables us to distinguish between what in our thoughts and intentions is merely natural, of the soul, and what is spiritual, of the Spirit of life working in us. It is all too easy to be actuated mainly, or even only, by the instincts and notions of the natural man. It was very natural that Israel feared to face giants and attack walls fortified up to heaven. Only faith in God gave Caleb and Joshua victory over natural fear and inspired them with conquering courage.

The joints connect the limbs together, and the marrow is the vehicle of life; without the latter, joints and limbs are dead, powerless. Similarly, the soul contains and combines our various faculties; but these are dead Godward unless vitalized by the life of God acting through the regenerated spirit of man. This distinction is peculiar to the Word of God, and it is vital to a right conception of the perils and the possibilities of the believer. Therefore Paul dwelt upon it at the very outset of his letter to the carnal or the natural Christians at Corinth, so that they might learn to distinguish between soul and spirit as the divergent sources and spheres of our inward life, and might cease from the carnal, rise above the natural (the soulish), and live by the instincts and impulses of the spiritual. "Spirit" here means the new nature begotten in the believer by the new birth, by which thenceforth he is to live: *"walk by spirit and desires of flesh ye shall in no wise fulfil . . . If we live by spirit, by spirit also we should walk"* as our new rule of life (1Cor. 2:10-3:3; Gal. 5:16-25; Rom. 8:1-16).

It is of the highest importance to recognize these two types of life - the soulish and the spiritual; for this distinction, and these two realms and orders of life, are manifest in His sight before Whose all-penetrating eyes all things are naked and laid open. We must consider having to face such a One. We may deceive ourselves, and fondly think that the soul life, because it does not indulge the viler lusts of the flesh (carnality), will pass His scrutiny. But the heavenly world, to which we are called, is spiritual, not soulish; and only that element of our present life and activity which is of the spirit is preparing us for that upper

and purer realm or contributes to our fitness for it and its activities. As with the resurrection body, the outer man, so much more must it be with the inner man, that the spiritual must swallow up the soulish (1Cor. 15:44-46). It is in the soul that our severest perils rise and work; it is in the natural heart that sin deceives us, and never more subtly and successfully than by the notion that the natural life is sufficient - even though it is not infused by the light and energy of the spiritual life.

It is our wisdom to submit always to the searching, challenging, directing, enabling action of God's words; for His life is in His words - *"they are spirit and they are life"* (John 6:63) - the life that is life indeed. *"To-day, if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts"*, but rather, as is the design of these present pages, *"exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called to-day"*, i.e. so long as the offer of the heavenly calling is open and the glory of God is still set forth for faith to attain.

The Sixth Warning

Hebrews 5:12 – 6:3

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this will we do, if God permit.

The persons warned have spiritual life, for they have spiritual hearing and spiritual appetite for milk. They are distinctly compared to infants; they have capacity for growth, and they can walk, for they are exhorted to press on. Obviously, they are not dead persons, for none of these activities is possible for such.

The need for this warning was that their hearing was less acute than it had been: *"ye have become (gegonate) dull of hearing"* (5:11). They had been believers long enough to have become teachers of the faith to others; but they were losing ground from not growing and from not teaching. We must teach, or we will forget what we know. Ceasing to give, we cease to have; such is the law of love.

As their appetite failed, the power of digestion weakened. They could not now master advanced lessons or assimilate solid food. Milk was all they could endure, and even this light diet they could not find for themselves, but had to be spoon-fed by others. As a consequence, they were weak in understanding; they found it difficult to distinguish between good and bad food, and were in danger of arrested development, instead of being on the way to become full-grown men. Because they used their spiritual senses less and less, their sensitiveness in things heavenly became impaired. Such torpid natures can take unwholesome food, or even poison, and not know it; they can sustain injuries and be unaware of it. Today there are an abundant number of believers of this type. Their dangers are many and serious; hence the warnings given, and the exhortations pressed home.

The exhortation was: *"let us press on."* He has mentioned the rudiments of the *"first principles of the oracles of God"* (5:12); He further speaks of *"the principles of the doctrine of Christ"* (6:1).

It is obvious that the oracles of God and the word or message concerning Christ had their "beginning" ("first") in the Old Testament. Therefore he who would become versed in the oracles of God and their message concerning their chief topic, the Messiah, must begin with and sufficiently understand the Old Testament. Failure in this is an initial reason for the infantile condition of so many Christians and indeed, so many preachers and teachers.

On the other hand, to learn only the A.B.C.'s, the multiplication table, or only the rudiments of any subject, is to remain a child in understanding. It is for us to press on unto full growth, to attain to years and stature, to become men of God. This was one of Paul's last exhortations (2Tim. 3:14-17). Observe the progress from a babe to a man of God. It is the message of Gal. 3:15-4:11; children are to grow up and become sons, in the full sense of sonship: grown-up sons, able to understand and to cooperate with their Father; and the danger with these Galatian believers, as these here, lay in turning back to the rudimentary things and being contented with them (Gal. 4:9). Thus were the Ephesians also urged to "*grow up in all things into Him Who is the head, even Christ*" (Eph. 4:11-16), and so to be no longer children.

The growth of a child does not just happen. It requires at first the diligent care of mother or nurse, feeding, washing, clothing, and training it. And when that first stage has been passed, then the growing child, youth, man must diligently render to *himself* these same services, or growth will cease, health fail, and decline set in. The Old Testament oracles give the foundation of knowledge of God and of God-fearing living. The foundation is indispensable and permanent, but its use is that upon it a superstructure can be built, and without the latter it is of small value, because it is incomplete.

The Old Testament foundation is formed of six elements, which form three pairs:

(1) Repentance from dead works, and (2) Faith toward God:

(3) The teaching concerning washings, and (4) Laying on of hands:

(5) Resurrection of the dead, and (6) Eternal judgment.

(1, 2.) The entire Old Testament may be summarized as a continuous call to men to repent of sin and set their trust in God. The offering of a sacrificial victim was an expression of this repentance and faith, being an acknowledgment by the sinner that he deserved to die, yet trusted in the mercy of God.

(3, 4.) But God sought, even demanded, that to this judicial transaction there be added actual visible purity, together with a renewal of the nature and its powers by the imparting of gifts from Himself. The former was symbolized by the frequent washings ordained under the law; the latter accompanied the laying on of the hands of the priest.

It is clear that the distinctively Christian baptism cannot be here meant by the plural "washings", neither can it be the laying on of hands as in New Testament times; for these are later than the Old Testament. Yet these do teach the same lessons as those older ordinances, namely, personal purity and enduement from on high.

Those who lay too heavy a stress on these God-appointed externals should observe that the washings and the laying on of hands themselves were not part of the foundation. The passage says that it was the *teaching* connected with these that was of the foundation. This did not call for *non-observance* of the

external rites, nor today of the Christian rites; but it does forbid attaching virtue to the mere *outward observance* without the spiritual conditions they taught being personally realized.

(5, 6.) The Old Testament did not speak much of the resurrection or eternal judgment. Yet it must not be inferred that these solemn prospects were little known in early times. It would be of interest and profit if some competent scholar would gather together the ancient pagan myths which embody these expectations, however confused and corrupted their form might be. It would show that the primary revelation by God included this knowledge, and placed the race under responsibility to walk as those who knew that death does not end all, but is followed by resurrection and judgment. And the Old Testament sufficiently emphasizes this.

A few centuries after the Flood Abraham is found expecting confidently the raising of Isaac to life "*accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead*" (Heb. 11:17-19); "*we [himself and Isaac] will come again to you*" (Gen 22:5). And later men of faith anticipated the like outcome of life, so that at the close of that Old Testament period and the commencement of the new age Martha could express the general belief as to the dead: "*I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection in the last day*" (John 11:24). A little later a learned Jew, Paul, could declare in public that the hope of attaining to resurrection was an inspiration to all pious Israelites (Acts 26:6-8); and in 11:35 our Writer will mention that some of old were expecting an even better resurrection – the First Resurrection.

These truths were therefore the foundation of true religion, and Paul could assert that his preaching had as its basis that men "*should repent and turn to God doing works worthy of repentance*", which covers points (1-4) above; and then he adds that as such his teaching was that of the law and the prophets, fulfilled in Christ as the Victim offered in the suffering of death and as the personal proof of resurrection and judgment, which is points (5) and (6) above (Acts 26:20, 22, 23).

This, then, is the foundation, and on it all godly living in all ages has been built, and must still be built; yet it is only the foundation. It is the *foundation* of Christianity, but it is not *Christianity*, even as the foundation is not the superstructure. What the Lord and the apostles built hereupon will be expanded upon by the Writer later; but for the present he presses the necessity of a mind, a purpose, a resolute effort to move onward from knowing the beginning of what God taught concerning Christ to ever fuller understanding of the complete Divine message concerning Him. To hinder a sinner from even getting *on* to the foundation is a first endeavor of Satan; but failing in this, then he is studious to make the believer satisfied with just the foundation - and here innumerable souls are deceived, and dwarfed, and despoiled. The perils of this are great; and to warn, to exhort, to encourage, to foster growth and advance, is the immediate object of the Writer.

To be limited to the truths that form the foundation is like one who should repeatedly lay a foundation of a house but not build thereon. This is what too many are doing. This is largely the distinction of the great denominational Churches; it is the basic reason why they perpetuate the ritual of the Old Testament, and it explains why even true but simple believers in such communities are commonly infantile in knowledge of the purposes of God and in spiritual experience.

Therefore "*let us press on. . . . And this will we do, if God permit.*" IF GOD PERMIT! Is there then some possibility that God will not permit a Christian to press on? Or is this merely a pious compliment to the Almighty, an ancient form corresponding to Deity? The context will show that the remark is made with solemn intention - that it is sadly possible for a Christian to reach a state of soul when God in equal love and righteousness will no more allow him to press on.

The Seventh Warning

Hebrews 6:4-8

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. 7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

The line of teaching along which the Writer was led by the Spirit was that of constant reference to the Old Testament. In these five chapters preceding he has quoted fourteen passages, and has drawn his lessons and warnings from the ancient histories and institutions. It is therefore somewhat surprising that expositors have not used this feature as the key to open this present passage. For want of this key the warning has been found difficult to explain and apply. Is it addressed to mere professors? Or can it apply to the regenerate? If the latter, how does it agree with the teaching of other passages that the life of the regenerate is eternal life and that therefore their security from eternal death is assured?

The great Second Warning discussed previously was drawn from the failure of Israel at Kadesh Barnea. Is this still in his mind? Is it the needed key? Let us examine several of the particulars.

(1). Enlightenment. When God was commissioning Moses to return from the desert to Egypt and set Israel free, Moses answered that, when he should inform the Israelites that the God of their fathers had appeared to him and was intending to deliver them, they would reply, "What is His Name?" (Exo. 3:13). This implies that they had lost the knowledge of the God of their fathers and of His covenant with them and their descendants. Fifty years later Joshua threw light on this by reminding their children that their fathers, the generation to which he himself belonged, had served the gods of Egypt (Joshua 24:14). Nine centuries later God, through Ezekiel (20:6-8), confirmed this, reminding Israel that their fathers did not forsake the idols of Egypt, for they quickly made a golden calf and worshipped it, which was a chief form of Egyptian idolatry.

Israel had succumbed to their surroundings and had adopted the religion of their oppressors, quite possibly in the hope that the oppression might thus be lightened. In consequence they were in the dark as to their true God and His purposes concerning them. But through Moses they were, as our Writer puts it, *"those who were once enlightened."*

(2). Tasted of the heavenly gift. As soon as Israel had commenced their walk with God in the desert the question of food became urgent. The desert yielded no bread. Nine hundred years afterward, in the days of their deepest apostasy, their God told them that His heart had been touched by that venture of faith: *"I remember concerning thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown"* (Jer. 2:2). Though their love was but as the morning dew and passed early away (Hos. 6:4), yet it was sincere at the time, and thus they are a type of such today who feel some true, if immature, love to the God Who has first loved them.

In response to their trust and cry God gave them manna: *"I will rain bread from heaven for you"* (Exo. 16:4). Thus they *"tasted of the heavenly gift"*, that gift which was the type of the true Bread from heaven, even Jesus the Son of God, the gift of His Father to hungry men (John 6:32ff).

Two considerations are vital:

(a) Consider that the English verb "tasted" is here used in its less usual sense of to experience fully, to appreciate the quality of a thing. The Writer has already so used it at 2:9 "that he should taste of death", meaning that deep and thorough experience of death which the Redeemer endured. On our present verse it might be said: "have tasted (personally and consciously partaken of)". It is not, therefore, here a mere mental or aesthetic appreciation of Christ that is in view, as when a skeptic or social reformer acknowledges.

(b) And this is made certain by the apostle's assertion (I Cor. 10:3, 4) concerning even Israel in the desert that *"they did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them [went about with them]; and the rock was Christ."* It is thus evident that, though still carnal, they were at least spiritual enough to know that they partook, for their inward man, of spiritual counterparts to the material food and drink for the body. It follows that they cannot be types of persons still actually dead to things heavenly, whatever their profession; but only of such as have some true, conscious enjoyment of the heavenly Bread.

(3). Made partakers of the Holy Ghost. Directly after the giving of the manna came the smiting of the rock and the supply of living water. From the statement just quoted from 1Cor. 10:4 it is plain that in some real degree they were made "partakers of the Holy Spirit"; that they experienced some measure of the Spirit's grace. Referring to that period Isaiah, seven centuries later, said: *"Where is He that put his Holy Spirit in the midst of them? . . . the Spirit of Jehovah caused them to rest"* (Isa. 63:11, 14).

That the manna and the spiritual rock accompanied them throughout the journey teaches that Bread and Water are the only provision that God makes for His children in the desert. To demand more than these is disastrous. Israel did so: *"Give us flesh., there is nothing at all save this manna to look to"* (Num. 11:4-6); upon which history the Divine comment is: *"He gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul"* (Psa. 106:15).

Here, as wherever water is a type, is meant the blessed Spirit of God (John 7:38-39). First manna, then water; first Christ the Bread of heaven (John 6), then the Spirit, the Water of life (John 7). First Calvary, then Pentecost; and only one who has availed himself of the blood receives the water. That the Writer had in mind a definite, known reception of the Spirit is shown by the use of the aorist participle (genethentas), *"they became partakers"* at a distinct point, and experientially.

(4). The Good Word of God. Israel reached the desert of Sinai on the fifteenth day of the second month after they left Egypt (Exo. 16:1). The next fortnight was momentous. During this time they were given the manna and the living water; there followed the fight with Amalek, and Moses judging the people; and on the first day of the next month they came to Mount Sinai (Exo. 19: 1). There God appeared in glory and the people heard His veritable voice speaking unto them, commanding them, statutes and ordinances *"which if a man do, he shall live in them"* (Ezek. 20:11, 13, 21). For this *"commandment was unto life"*, this *"law is holy, righteous, good"*, and *"spiritual"* (Rom. 7:10, 12, 14); of which Israel had ample experience, in so far as they obeyed it. They *"tasted the Word of God that it is good."* The above force of

to taste applies here also; those spoken of had not merely tasted - but recognized and experienced - the goodness of the word of God.

Thus Israel exemplified the course of all spiritual life, today as then: redemption from wrath by blood; deliverance from bondage by power; Christ the food to strengthen; the Spirit to refresh and vitalize; and now God's words to instruct and regulate. Please note that the law at Sinai was not given to affect salvation from wrath (the angel of destruction) and from Satan (Pharaoh); but to guide and rule men *already* redeemed and free. It could not justify the guilty, nor grant life to the dead; but it could bless the living, if they would be obedient; and this it can do today, if the Christian will render loving obedience. The saint of old could say: "*Oh how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day*" (Psa. 119: 97); the saint today can say: "*I delight in the law of God after the inward man*" (Rom. 7: 22). Both we *and* those of old "*taste the word of God that it is good.*"

(5). The Coming Age. But there was another privilege of both that age and this. They experienced "*the powers of a coming age*", and so it has been in this age of the gospel. Under law and under grace mighty works have been seen - which are a foretaste of the coming millennial age.

The cloud of glory, which did not scatter in the fierce winds of the desert, was a picture of that canopy of glory, which is compared to the cloud by day and the fire by night in the desert, and which shall abide over mount Zion in that coming day when Jerusalem shall have been purged (Isa. 4:2-6).

God's personal and visible presence, His daily guidance and protection, constant supplies of food and drink, victory over enemies; healing of disease, preservation of health; these and similar displays of heavenly powers will be known more fully in the age of glory yet to come. In measure they have been known in this age, both in spiritual blessings and external advantages. This last was especially the case at the commencement of Israel's national career and at the commencement of the church of God; but all through both ages those powers have worked which will be more largely known in the next age in the full subservience of nature to the good of man, in bodily health, and other ways.

But not only in acts of grace were those powers displayed, but also in chastisement upon the unfaithful in Israel; and so it is today, and so it will be during the Millennium. For in 1Cor. 10 the parallel between Israel and ourselves covers both privileges and warnings. They did, as we, partake of Christ, so are we most solemnly warned lest their judgments also overtake us; for "*these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come*" (vs. 6-13). Both aspects - blessings and judgments - are foretold of the millennial age in one sentence (Isa. 65:20), as elsewhere.

(6). Falling away. What then is the lesson for us? They "*fell away*" (parapipto); "*let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (pipto)*" (1Cor. 10:12)." The idea [in parapiptein] is that of falling aside from the right path, as the idea of "amartanein" (sin) is that of missing the right mark.

When did Israel thus turn from the right path? At Kadesh Barnea (Num. 13 and 14). The right path lay straight ahead; but it led uphill, with giant defenders, monsters by descent, size, vice, and ferocity. Faith failed, courage fled, so they turned aside and resolutely refused to go up.

Thus at Kadesh Barnea they "*fell away*", and God saw and declared that "*it was impossible to renew them to a change of mind*", that is, to make them thereafter dutiful and trustful. What was their cry - "*Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt*" (Num. 14:2) - but a hasty regret that they had accepted

redemption at all? What was their resolve - *"Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt"* - but an impulse to reverse the salvation effected by the blood of the lamb slain and a putting of Moses to open shame as, in their view, an unsafe leader? In this they were a type of those today who so openly turn from Christ and return to a worldly life as to *"crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and to put Him to an open shame."*

No one is justified in saying that any particular person is beyond the possibility of repenting; nevertheless there are such who die in this apostate state, and it is these who are in question in Heb. 6. Their unchangeable condition is known to God in their lifetime, though not to us.

Of the men of war, Caleb and Joshua were like the land that gives due response to the heaven-sent blessings and *"bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake also it is tilled"*; the many were as the plot that bore only the thorns and the thistles of faithlessness and rebellion. These latter were *"rejected"* by God: *"they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers"* (Num. 14:23); for they had rejected God's special gift. And how *"nigh unto a curse"* they were these awful words of their God tell: *"I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them"* (vs. 12). And just as the present end of weed-producing land is that it be *"burned"*, so it was said to them *"your carcasses [shall] be consumed in the wilderness"* (vs. 33), a word which is used once again of Israel when later on God was rejecting them nationally: *"The bellows blow fiercely; the lead is consumed of the fire; in vain do they go on refining; for the wicked are not plucked away. Refuse silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them"* (Jer. 6:29-30).

But some would still ask can such apostasy be possible in a real child of God? Are we not in this place at least driven to suppose that here (Heb. 6) it is only professors making a fair show in the flesh, but not knowing the reality of divine grace, who are described? Please take particular notice:

(a) These were born heirs to the land, being children of the covenant, and they were those who had been actually redeemed and emancipated.

(b) The partaking in the benefits implies the truly regenerate person.

(c) Though they were *"nigh to a curse"* they were not actually cursed. Their noble leader interceded for them, and God said, *"I have pardoned according to thy word; but in very deed, as I live these rebels shall not see the land."* Our great Priest delivers His own perpetually from the wrath to come (see 1Thess. 1:10: "delivereth"), but He cannot, and would not, hinder the severest chastisement and loss where such are due.

(d) God saw to it that they never did get back to Egypt. They perished in the wilderness, as a backslider may die in his apostate state; but they were not permitted to get back to the place which pictured unalleviated separation from God.

(e) Even though they had forfeited the fullest of the proffered blessings, yet God in most wondrous grace still dealt with them as His people, and not as foes. *"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them and carried them all the days of old"* (Isa. 63:9). *"For about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness"* (Acts 13:18), feeding, clothing, guiding, and protecting them, and in fact doing for them all that He could do short of restoring to them the prospect of entering the land that they had rejected. It was thus that Reuben and Esau were dealt with by their fathers.

(f) That in Hebrews the Writer regarded those he addressed as genuine saints is abundantly clear in the next verses (9-12). He was "*persuaded better things*" of them, though he thus warned them: it was not of *salvation* itself but of "*things that accompany salvation*" that he was writing - not of escaping judgment and slavery in Egypt, but of the benefits and prospects which *accompanied* that deliverance. Unlike their salvation, these latter "things" were not yet secured and might be missed.

I will concede that here is a picture of the most extreme kind of rebellion possible, and not of what we may term ordinary failure. Lot's conduct in deliberately consorting with the sinners of Sodom was a very different offence to Abraham's failure of faith and of courage when he saw, as he thought, his wife in danger in Egypt; and it was accordingly differently dealt with by God. For Abraham, though humbled, was helped, and was restored to the hill-top communion with God; while Lot was left barely to escape, and finally to close his days in shame, conscious that his course had desperately corrupted his own daughters, and involved himself in lasting dishonor. Let us remember the teaching in Gal. 5:21, as to the practicing of gross moral or physical sin resulting in disinheritance from the kingdom.

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

As in Esau's case, so it was with these men of war; it was a deliberate turning from high advantages offered, and indeed *desired* in measure; and a choice of the lower state because it seemed easier and more immediate. And have there not been instances of disciples facing God's call and leading towards high and noble living and full concentration upon heavenly things, but who, alas, have feared to cut loose from the things that bound them to the world? Don't many ever set their hearts on the things that are on the earth, though pleaded with by the Spirit to set their minds on the things that are above?

The full record of this aspect of powerful spiritual meetings, of holiness conventions, and of private labors of men who walk with God, has yet to be made known. A sad chapter it will prove to be as its tale is told of how alluring business or professional prospects, or worldly or fashionable marriage offers, or social and political ambitions, yes, and even sheer carnality, not to speak of a hesitant timidity that grieves and insults our faithful God, have caused many of His own people to turn back from the heights of conflict and of glory to the low level of just being "saved from Hell", as is believed, and then "making the best of both worlds", as the hideously deceptive phrase goes. They can't see that it is in reality a making of the worst of both worlds.

Workers of long experience in the gospel have known ungodly persons who seemed utterly callous to external solemnities and impervious to heavenly appeals, while yet admitting theoretically the truth of all that the Bible teaches. And not so infrequently as might be thought it is learned that once or oftener such had been brought by the Spirit to a crisis, when a decision for or against Christ had to be made, and that it was by deliberate rejection that the state of apathy was reached which seems, and often proves to be, *unalterable*. And let those who have long and adequate experience in seeking to serve the people of God reflect upon cases of such as gave a clear account of a good conversion and of walking with God for a time, but who seem immovable as regards aspiring to elevated present experience and future and heavenly prospects. These admit the desirability of such a life and future, but manifest no sign of any determination to attain thereto. Most certainly it is not for us to pronounce upon any individual case, but rather to

exercise the love that "hopeth all things"; but it is impossible at times not to inquire in one's own mind whether certain have not passed the limit of forbearance and been turned back to spend their days in the wilderness: *"we shall press on, if God permit."*

As the Spirit ceases to strive with the ungodly we just remarked upon, so is it written of Israel as the people of God: *"He said, Surely they are my people, children that will not deal falsely; so He was their saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old."* (Isa. 63:8-9). They were His people, His sons, whose afflictions He shared, giving them divine love and pity. Himself was their Redeemer, and those whom He redeemed He bare and carried as a father his child. *"But they" - they "rebelled and grieved His holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy - Himself fought against them"* (Isa. 63:10). And similarly we Christians are warned that it is possible, not merely to grieve, but to quench the Spirit. Do we reflect sufficiently upon the inevitable consequences, present and future, that must surely attend such grave sin?

Thus is given, and given expressly for our admonition, the supreme example of how individuals may lose their place in the body corporate and their share in the fullest blessings open to attainment. Of course, God will perform His covenants, however long be the delay occasioned by His people's waywardness. In the fourth generation Abraham's posterity duly returned to Canaan; but not all did so who might have. Thus, too, God will have in His glory His church, and Christ will have His bride, and the universe will have its executive government. But let us each give heed that we obtain a full reward, and let us in love *"exhort one another day by day, as long as it is called Today"* - that is, so long as the opportunity for attainment remains open.

It surely ought not to be needful to add that the words, "whose end is to be burned", do not point to an endless Hell for those so treated. If it means that the thorns and thistles are to be burned, and that such treatment would *benefit* and not finally ruin the land, then this would be a picture of the finally sanctifying effect upon the believer of even the severest chastisement. But even if we take the meaning that it is the *land* that is to be burned, it still remains a picture of *temporary* affliction, for in any case the land remains. And though burning it is a last resource of the farmer, yet the ultimate design and issue is beneficial. *"Our God is a consuming fire"*; but the same fire which destroys the alloy cleanses the gold, though the process is drastic and may need to be prolonged.

Interpreted thus by Israel's history this passage in chapter 6 of Hebrews enforces the same lesson as the Second Warning in chapters 3 and 4, as follows:

That for them of old as for Christians now:

(a). Rebellion, definite and persistent, can induce a state of heart of which there will be *no reversal in this life*. The limit of time arises from the example of Israel as narrated in God's histories. These do not introduce the question of the eternal prospects of those in question, which question therefore does not arise in the application the Writer makes to Christians.

(b). The penalty of such rebellion may include (1) the wasting of this present life in a desert experience, as to which more will be said; (2) the death of the body under summary judgment - see again 1Cor. 10:8-10; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:27-32; Jas. 5:20; 1 John 5:16, 17, etc.; and (3) the loss of Canaan, that is, the Millennial age,

(c). These possible penalties, though indeed severe, do not involve the eternal destruction of regenerate persons. The type forbids. Not one Israelite was able to return to Egypt, from which they had all been separated by blood and water. Not one reached again the former standing as condemned and liable to die without mercy. So also a regenerate person can never return to the lost condition of the unregenerate. God will not suffer it: He has too much respect to the blood of His Son, even though a *believer* may repudiate its value. It is never to be assumed that the bodily death of a person under the judgment of God necessarily implies his eternal death; nor is it to be assumed that "fire" or "burning" must mean eternal fire, the lake of fire. Such terms are used much more often of the temporal judgments of God.

In conclusion, it is *impossible*, for those who had been saved, and had a life controlled by the Holy Spirit, had knowledge of the meat of the Word of God, and of the powers (those who will rule) of the world (age) to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance. Notice here that God did not say it is impossible to renew them to *salvation*, but rather *repentance*. These are saved people who cannot lose their salvation - only their *reward*. Therefore, once one progresses to see the meat doctrines (epignosis), and understands that which is necessary for the salvation of his soul, and if he then falls away (apostatizes), he *cannot be renewed to repentance in order to enter the kingdom*. His life from that time on will be back in the first principles of Christ. And his lifestyle will manifest the re-crucifying of Jesus over and over, and putting Him to an open shame (Heb. 6:1-6). Those who are apostate teachers may even begin to teach the insecurity of the believer, thus making *others* believe it is necessary for them to be saved over and over again (if that were possible).

The teaching that Christ has to die more than once is repugnant to our Father. Yet, those who teach that a believer can lose his salvation are doing just that. For, if they could lose their salvation, Christ would have to die the second time in order to save them again. This would be against the law of God which says, "One purchase price for one purchase". Moses made a similar mistake when he marred the type that teaches this. He was told by God to strike the rock in the wilderness once in order to get water. This was a type of Christ dying on the Cross (being struck) so that the Holy Spirit could flow from Him to satisfy our spiritual thirst. Then, God told Moses that when Israel needed water again, that he should only *speak* to the rock. But, in a moment of anger at the people, Moses struck it twice. This marred the type by making it teach that Christ could die twice. This so angered God that Moses (in type only) was "blotted out of the book of life" - he was not permitted to enter the Promised Land (type of the kingdom). He could only see it from a mountain top far away (Exo 17:6; Num 20:8-12; Deut 34:1-4). Thus Moses is the Old Testament type Jesus may have had in mind when he said:

Luke 13:28

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

This verse in Hebrews is one of the verses most often touted by those who believe that a person can lose his salvation. Without the knowledge of Salvation of the Soul, this conclusion seems to be a proper "rightly dividing of the word". The phrase "...and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost" can only apply to a born again Christian, by any honest appraisal. Furthermore, the other qualifications of this person listed in verses 4 and 5 lend ever-stronger credence to this conclusion. The truth of the matter is that this person so described surely is saved. To deny this is to ignore sound exegesis. This person has fallen away, (has become an apostate), and God says that it is impossible to renew him again unto repentance.

But those without the knowledge of Salvation of the Soul cannot see that Paul is talking about renewing them again to repentance, not to salvation. Paul says it is impossible for a true apostate to repent and return on the road to Salvation of the Soul.

But some would say, "In verses 9 and 10 he seems to put born again Christians in a separate category that does not include the above person." But truly, this is what Paul *hopes and expects* from the believer, and it does not exclude the possibility of such apostasy occurring. For notice that in verse 12 following he once again makes a division of believers into two categories:

Hebrews 6:12

That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Therefore, here again are two types of believers – the slothful, and those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. The slothful Christian did not inherit the promises.

The Eighth Warning

Hebrews 10:26-31

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Here again, we have some heavy artillery for those who would say we can lose our salvation. The phrase "the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified" cinches that this person is saved. There is no other honest conclusion - although most try to weasel out of it. But the truth is that this person had "received the knowledge of the truth" (epignosis), and knew about Salvation of the Soul, and chose nevertheless to willfully sin against God, and to fall away, or apostasize. We know from the previous warning that it is impossible to renew this person to repentance; that he will not only lose his soul at the Judgment Seat, but his fate will be even worse: "fiery indignation" (another reference to Gehenna).

Now, the unregenerate person wishes that God would let him alone and not frighten him with threats of judgment. Similarly, the weak heart of the believer might wish that he be left to enjoy a carnal condition and not be disturbed by solemn warnings. But God loves both the one and the other too well to indulge them thus.

Privilege must be balanced by responsibility, and responsibility undischarged must involve penalty. Grace can be abused to the dishonor of God and the injury of man; and therefore grace itself imposes penalties upon the abuse of itself. Thus everything is of grace, including wrath. Because God is love He warns and chastises, and very severely when necessary, if only that the ends of love might be served. The passage before us is such an instance, but because its statements are severe, they must be examined with strictness.

The statement assumes that the persons in view can sin in a particular manner, and tells them that if they do so, very serious consequences will follow.

The Persons Addressed.

(1). "We." Who are intended? The Writer uses the pronoun with emphasis several times. If you will consider the following places, you will be seen that the "we" includes the Writer, and must therefore mean the Christian circle of which he was a member: 2:1, 3; 3:6; 4:13; 7:26; 10:39; 12:1, 25; 13:6. It is impossible to say that each of that entire circle, including the Writer, were mere *professors*, unregenerate, deceived or deceiving. Therefore the warnings apply to real Christians.

(2). They had received a *knowledge of the truth*. *Epignosis* means a personal, experiential knowledge; and these had received such a knowledge. They not merely had an offer of it, or a possibility of acquiring it; they had embraced the offer and had gained this experiential knowledge. By the very choice of the word, the Writer gives us to understand that he means not merely a superficial, historical knowledge about the truth, but a living perception of the same by faith – a perception that had seized upon such truth and fused it into oneness with itself.

This knowledge of the truth can be equated with a full, experiential knowledge of the Great Salvation, or Salvation of the Soul. This is parallel with 6:4 above; those there in view had been thoroughly enlightened and had received a real appreciation of the heavenly gift and of the word of God.

(3). The blood of the covenant had sanctified them. They had regarded that blood as sacred and themselves as dedicated to God by reason of it. This dedication had wrought out in them its due practical results, and had thus shown its reality, because of the fact that:

(4). They had endured severe persecution, "*a great fight of sufferings*. (vs. 32-34)" This had involved reproaches, afflictions, and fellowship with fellow-saints in the similar furnace, and espousing the cause of the imprisoned, so exposing themselves to arrest. Moreover they had enjoyed such a living, invigorating assurance of their heavenly inheritance as to be positively joyful when robbed of their earthly possessions. Both the law and the mobs attacked them, but they had faced both with boldness.

Will anything less than an experiential enjoyment of Christ enable such suffering for His sake? Obviously then, they were such as Peter describes in his first epistle (1:3-9), who had been born again, who had a living hope of the heavenly inheritance, who had faith and were therefore being guarded by the power of God, who rejoiced greatly in their as yet unseen Saviour, and were already receiving a real measure of their salvation.

(5). vs. 30. But, as if to put the matter beyond dispute, the Writer applies to them the words of Moses to Israel, "*The Lord shall judge His people*", in which place there is no question that these could be His enemies, avowed or secret, but that they are His own people, and particularly that remnant of His people who had failed badly, were to be chastised severely, and yet would be saved ultimately (Deut. 32:35-43).

Indeed, so certainly were those addressed by the Writer really the people of God walking the way of life, that all they needed was endurance, steadfastness, perseverance on that way until the Coming One should come and they should then receive the promised inheritance (vs. 36-38).

If this measure of proof was given *only* to show that these addressed were regenerate persons within the scope of the new covenant, it would be considered ample to establish the point. This is questioned by some only when put in relation to the accompanying warnings. But it is an insidious way of treating adequate proof to argue around it merely because it may involve problems, difficulties, and a challenge to one's presuppositions or even convictions.

However severe the warnings here given, however difficult it may seem to harmonize them with the eternal security of the believer, however many cherished dispensational opinions may be challenged, there is really only one honest way of dealing with the passage, which is to apply it to real children of God and accept the consequences of doing this.

The Sin

(1). *It is willful.* The word (*hekousios*) takes strong emphasis "*willfully* sinning we." It is found elsewhere only at I Pet. 5:2, where shepherds are exhorted to tend the flock "*not of constraint, but willingly*", with their whole and free will. Its root *hekousios* comes only at Philemon 14, where Philemon was encouraged to act "*not as of necessity, but of free will.*"

The sin therefore is deliberate, determined, committed with full intention. Thus it is by no means a case of a sudden temptation causing an unintended fall, or even of succumbing often to a tyrannical habit which one loathes and fights, even if to no avail.

(2). It is *continuous and maintained*, as is shown by the *present* participle, *hamartanontdn*. It is willfully maintaining a decision made against light already received, because:

(3). This decision is made *after* having received and enjoyed that experiential knowledge of the truth above considered.

(4). It is thus *comparable to the sin against the law* of Moses described by the word *athetisas* (vs. 28). This word means to reject (1Tim. 5:12; Luke 7:30), to treat as void (Gal. 2:21; 3:15), to set aside as useless (1Cor. 1:19), to spurn a person (Luke 10:16; John 12:48); or, as the cognate noun *athetisis* means in this Epistle (7:18), to displace one thing and replace it by another, or to dismiss a matter entirely, treat it as not existing (9:26). Thus a man might "set at naught" the Law of Moses. Here also the participle used denotes an act done deliberately and by which the doer stood firm.

There is an instance of such conduct. In plain defiance of the oft-announced law of the Sabbath, a man gathered firewood on that day (Num. 15:32-36). A special inquiry was made of God as to His mind and will, and by special instruction from God the offender was stoned to death.

This solemn example is appended to and illustrates the immediately preceding regulations which directed that if a person, or even the whole congregation, sinned by error unwittingly, the priest could make atonement and the error would be forgiven; but if the sin was *deliberate*, death must follow [provided adequate evidence had established guilt (Num. 15:22-31)].

Later, the sin of Achan included these elements and involved this penalty; and presumably because his family could not but have been privy to his act, seeing that he hid the articles in the ground in their common tent, they all shared his judgment; and their possessions also became involved, on the same principle that Adam's sin brought desolation over the realm he ruled (Josh. 7).

The severity of such penalties is because of the enormity of the sin Godward. After providing for the pardon of unrecognized sin the law said: *"But the soul that doeth ought with a high hand, whether he be homeborn or a foreigner, the same blasphemeth Jehovah; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of Jehovah, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him"*; that is, it shall not be transferred to a substitute, a victim on the altar (Num. 15:30, 31).

This refusal by God of the benefit of atoning sacrifice, when sin was deliberate, persistent, continued against light and remonstrance, was declared by Jehovah Himself in His words to Samuel: *"And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated with sacrifice nor offering for ever"* (1 Sam. 3:14).

The word "despised" has two important Old Testament illustrations: *"He is despised and rejected of men"* (Isa. 53: 3), and *"Esau despised his birthright"* (Gen. 25:34). Deliberate disobedience to a known command of God is equal to such wickedness as the rejection of His Son and of His gifts. To a high priest himself (Eli), because he had tolerated evil conduct that he ought to have punished, the sentence was given that his family should lose their priestly position, *"for they that despise me [the same word] shall be lightly esteemed"* (1 Sam. 2:30).

(5). *The Sin defined.* The sin in question is now specified and includes three particulars:

(a). It is a *treading under foot the Son of God*.

This word "tread down" (katapateo) is used of men treading into the dust or mire salt that has been thrown away (Matt. 5:13); of swine trampling on pearls, articles precious to men but useless to swine (Matt. 7:6); of seed trodden down on the roadside (Luke 8:5); and of unfortunate persons trampled upon by a surging crowd (Luke 12:1). In the Greek Old Testament it is used of men crushing serpents with their feet (Psa. 91:13) and of a wild beast treading down a thistle or an egg in its way (2Chron. 25:18; Job 39:15).

These instances combine the notions of an action being intentional (as when a man grinds down a viper), contemptuous, violent, and destructive. The sin now in question treats thus the Son of God. Such conduct is evidently like that blaspheming and despising of God condemned under the law, and is therefore liable to the same penalty.

(b). But it is clearly impossible to take up such an antagonistic attitude to the Son of God and not thereby to reject His atoning death; for one who values His blood will honor His person, while he who despises Him will despise His sacrifice. Thus the sin in question involves a repudiation of redemption and sanctification by the blood of Christ.

This offender had acknowledged that the blood had redeemed him and had set him apart unto God. It was therefore sacred blood. Now he denies this and says that the blood of Christ was only common (*koinon*) blood, like that of any other man. This implies that Jesus was not the Son of God but only a man. It is the Unitarian position, whether taken by such as perversely claim to be Christian, or by deists, Jews, or Moslems. Such a person of necessity puts himself outside of the new covenant, for this is attested, "sealed", by the blood of Christ, and would have no validity apart therefrom.

(c). Such conduct involves an equal outrage upon the Holy Spirit, because He witnesses to Christ as the Son of God (John 14:26; I5: 26-27; 16:14), and it is He Who makes operative and peace giving the blood of Christ, Whose power indeed it was that energized the Redeemer to shed that atoning blood (ch. 9:I4; 10:22; 1 John 5:6-8).

That the sin in question is deeper, more intense than the "grieving" of the Spirit against which every Christian needs to watch is shown by the even stronger term employed (enubrizo), to do "despite" to the Spirit. Its root "hubris" means to damage severely, as a tempest a ship (Acts 27:10, 21). It is therefore employed by Paul to indicate the "injuries" he received by the violence of persecutors (2Cor. 12:10). In Rom. 1:30 its noun "hubristes" follows "hateful to God" as meaning "*insolent*" men, of whom Paul himself was a prominent example (1Tim. 1:13). Here he joins the word with blaspheming and persecuting, showing the kind of conduct meant. This is further shown by the use of the verb "hubrizo" to describe the insulting and murderous treatment by the wicked husbandmen of the servants of the owner of the vineyard. Christ used it concerning the outrageous conduct with which the Romans would treat Himself (Luke 18:32), and it is used concerning the similar treatment planned against Paul and Barnabas at Iconium (Acts 14:5), and which Paul did actually receive at Philippi (1Thess. 2:2). The one other use of the word shows how strongly the lawyers resented the sword-thrusts of Christ: "*Teacher, saying these things thou dost insult us also*" (Luke 11:45). The persons here in view despise the Word of God incarnate even as their ancestors had despised His word through Moses (Num. 15:31).

Thus this sin is more and worse than even a prolonged lapse into worldly and evil ways, sad and dangerous as that would be. It is directed knowingly, deliberately, wantonly, fiercely against the Son of God, the blood of God incarnate, the Spirit of God, and the word of God.

(d). If it be now asked whether it is conceivable that one who has been born again, has been really and knowingly sanctified by the blood of Christ, and has enjoyed some true benefit under the new covenant can lapse so utterly as to act in such a manner, the answer is that it is not only conceivable but it has taken place in known and modern instances.

The Penalty Announced

But what now becomes of the penalty of such sin? And what is the penalty? If it is not eternal what is it, and when and where is it exacted?

(1). *The penalty is inescapable*, because as regards such conduct "*there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*" (v. 26). The histories illuminate this.

David, a man after God's heart, lapsed into adultery and murder. For either of these crimes the penalty was death; under the law of Moses there remained no sacrifice that could be accepted (Deut. 22:22; Exo. 21:12-14). This explains why David, speaking of that occasion, said, "*Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*" (Psa. 51:16-17). But upon his repentance and public confession the word came: "*The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die*" - the capital sentence is remitted (2 Sam. 12:13). Of course, his sin had been put away on the ground of what Christ was to do for David. It is an instance of the "*passing over of sins done aforetime*" (Rom. 3:25).

But the prophet continues: *"thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme"*, punishment was to follow David to the end of his life. The next eight chapters detail the exacting of these penalties, which were truly severe.

This extended history of the sin of a man of God and its consequences establishes the principle that the remitting of the full and extreme penalty of sin does not cancel the inflicting of severe temporal penalties. *To discern this is of vital importance for understanding the effect of the redemption wrought by Christ at the cross.* That redemption cancels the penalty of eternal death for every true believer, but it does not always deliver him from present and temporal consequences of sin. For example, the cross of Christ does not guarantee that a Christian will not go to prison should he steal.

On the contrary, God more resolutely chastises His children *because* they are His children: *"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities"* (Amos 3:2); *"if we discerned ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with [at the same time as] the world"* (I Cor. 11:31, 32). For the explanation given by Peter of the fiery trials of saints is that *"the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God"* (1Pet. 4:17), which term is taken from Ezek. 9:5-6. Such parental chastisement is not eternal but temporal, but it is not to be escaped: the Father *"scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"*, only not for his destruction, but for his sanctification (Heb. 12: 6, 10).

(2). *The Penalty is severe.* The punishment must fit the crime or there will be a failure of justice. It is a *just* recompense that must be inflicted on each and every case (2:2). *"He scourgeth every son."* Scourging is very painful. It is *punishment* against which the Writer warns us. The word *timoria* comes here only, but Paul twice used its verb to describe the hard penalties he inflicted upon Christians for what he considered their crime in being Christians (Acts 22:5; 26:11).

Atoning sacrifice having been rejected and so not being available, what remains? What is to be expected? - Only a strict trial as to the offence (*krisis*) and the consequent punishment. This is described as *"fearful"*, something to be feared greatly, for it is a *"fierceness of fire, which shall devour the adversaries"* (vs. 27).

This word "adversary" should be noted. "Hupenantios" comes again only at Col. 2:14, where it describes the law as setting itself against the transgressors. So have those here in question set themselves against the Son of God - they are antagonistic to Him. The Greek Old Testament uses similar phrases and words at Isa. 26:11: *"fire shall devour thine adversaries"*; also see Isa. 64:2.

Again the histories illuminate the matter.

Old Testament Instances

(a) Lev. 10. Two sons of Aaron, consecrated to be priests, on the very day of their consecration violated a most solemn requirement of God, even that the fire upon which incense was to be burned unto Jehovah should be taken from the altar of burnt offering; which meant that that fire was connected with atonement for sin and therefore was "holy" fire. These two priests used other (strange) fire, and thus presumed to offer worship and intercession apart from sacrifice and atoning blood, *"and there came forth fire from before Jehovah and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah"* (Lev. 10:2). Those today who justify innovations in the church, the house of God, on the ground that these are *not* forbidden in Scripture should ponder the fact that Nadab and Abihu died because they did something which the Lord *"had not commanded them"*.

(b) Num. 16:35. Again, Korah and his associates, being only Levites, presumed to act as priests, in defiance of God's appointment that it was the sons of Aaron only who should present incense before Him (Num. 16:40; 1Sam. 2:28; 2Chron. 13:10, 11); and *"fire came forth from before Jehovah and devoured"* them.

(c) Num. 11:1. Once more: *"And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp."*

New Testament instances

(a) Acts 5. At the beginning of the old covenant period two priests fell dead in the house of God because of sin committed in that house (Lev. 10). At the beginning of the new covenant period two Christians fell dead in the house of God, because of sin committed in that house. The punishment was as severe in the latter case as the former.

(b) 1Cor. 5:1-6. Because of fornication a Christian in the Corinthian church was handed over to Satan for the destruction of his bodily life. That he was a child of God is certain from the fact that this devouring judgment would be only temporal. Here is definite proof that bodily death under the judgment of God, inflicted by Satan, does not necessarily involve eternal death. Therefore *"fierceness of fire"* does not necessarily mean *eternal* fire.

That Christians can so sin is clear from the warning that *all* in that church might become corrupted even as *"a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."*

(c) 1Cor. 11:29-32. And in fact others of that church were already leavened - they were so polluting the table of the Lord that heavy judgment was being inflicted, by bodily weakness, actual illness, and even premature death.

(d) 1 John 5:16-17. And this is contemplated by the solemn statement that *"there is sin unto death; not concerning this do I say that he should make request."* The Great Priest can have compassion on the ignorant and the erring (Heb. 5:2), but not upon those who sin with a high hand. Of such it is written: *"Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors"* (Psa. 59:5), which persons answer to the sinning willfully of our passage.

This consensus of Scripture shows that the passage before us is in harmony with the regular administration of the laws of the kingdom of God, to which administration of justice the children of the Sovereign are certainly subject. It would be truly disastrous if the royal family were permitted to defy the law with impunity. In the kingdom of God this is unthinkable. Consider He it is Who has declared of Himself, *"Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense"*, that is, It is My special business, to which I attend personally, particularly as regards My people: *"The Lord shall judge His people."*

Sorer Punishment

To a normally sensitive soul a death by stoning must have been a painful scene. The first stone might kill, or it might take many; and at the end there lay a poor battered corpse. Death by fire was startling and

terrifying. It left a charred, disfigured body as a warning against sin. "Of *how much sorer* punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy" who has sinned against both the Son and the Spirit of God?

The question is asked but not answered. The reader is challenged to think it over. Few, it is to be feared, do this or are willing to do it.

The question brings to mind solemn words of the Lord:

Matthew 18:6

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

In the thoughtful mind such questions initiate a deeper question. What punishment conceivable as to this present life can be thought of as more severe than premature death by stoning, drowning, or fire? Yet evidently something more severe is possible, or a violent death such as this would not be preferred, if it were not better than it. But if it is something more dreadful than such a death, must it not be after death?

An answer is not difficult for those who say that a child of God may lose salvation and be cast into the lake of fire for ever. That was certainly a more severe punishment than the worst this earth-life can bring.

But what answer can we give who assert that no child of God can be lost eternally? The many give no answer at all, but ignore such passages and problems; while those that may face the question treat such scriptures only superficially, and thus avoid their plain terms and force, by saying the persons in question were never regenerated by faith in Christ in the first place.

If the attitude of such must be stated plainly and firmly it amounts to this: that backsliders may be calmly consigned to everlasting damnation, but theories as to the nature of the Divine grace, opinions as to the membership and future of the church of God, dispensational schemes, and popular notions concerning the state after death - these must on no account be challenged or revised. If any reader is of this mind he naturally will not further pursue our present inquiries, even if he has read so far.

But the fact of the matter is, as already discussed in the previous chapter, that such a person will indeed suffer "*sorer punishment*" in the next age – even in the Outer Darkness, in the fires of Gehenna. As Jesus Himself so aptly said,

Luke 12:48

But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

The Ninth Warning

Hebrews 12:14-17

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; 16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Here we are warned that a believer can fail of the grace of God. This person has not lost his salvation (spirit). He has "sold his birthright" (his inheritance which God wants to give to all believers) for "one morsel of meat" (the trinkets, by comparison, of what the world offers in terms of riches, power, and even illicit sex [notice the reference to the 'fornicator']) verses the "true riches" that God offers. And notice also, that though this believer would plead with much "weeping and gnashing of teeth", there will be no repentance (no changing of mind about his just desserts) by Jesus at the Judgment Seat. Thus, this person lost his soul at the Judgment Seat.

The Principle of Peace

By the Greek word "diokete" - follow on, pursue eagerly, persecute - the picture of the race is resumed from vs. 1. It is the word used twice by Paul in Phil. 3:12-14: *"I follow after . . . I press toward the mark for the prize."* Paul had in view the final end, the prize; our Writer emphasizes an immediate object that is necessary to reach that final object - the leading a life of peace with all men. The believer is to be as zealous in walking in peace as the racer is to secure the crown. In a world marked by greed and contention, this is indeed a strenuous affair. It will not be obtained haphazardly, but only by such who pursue it as an all-worthy, all-desirable object, and who make every sacrifice to secure it.

In the eighteenth century an American, John Woolman the Quaker, saw clearly and truly that the principle of acquiring and retaining riches is a basic and inevitable source of strife. The pursuit of wealth (vast or small) will always bring contention (1Tim. 6:9), while the pursuit of peace alone will change this.

When a certain village refused to grant hospitality to the Son of God, two disciples proposed righteous and summary vengeance: *"But He turned and rebuked them. And they went to another village"* (Luke 9:51-56). They had not learned His earlier lesson: *"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God"* (Matt. 5:8). The very God of peace sent into this warring world the Prince of peace, Who made peace by the blood of His cross, peace between God and man, and man and man; therefore to us who know this the exhortation is: *"If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men"* (Rom. 12:18). If there is to be contention, see to it that it arises wholly from the other party.

The effect on personal character of this one habit and practice is immeasurable. The immediate result is an ever-increasing moral likeness to the Prince of peace; the son of God becomes more and more like the Son of God; which has intimate bearing upon that final goal when the son is to share the glory of the Son.

For by the very grammar of this passage this pursuit of peace is linked indivisibly with the development of that *"holiness without which no one shall see the Lord"* - it is all one pursuit, one present object. It is obvious that one who is selfish and contentious cannot be holy, for the Holy One is the God of love and peace. To promote peace, God made the supreme sacrifice of his well-beloved Son, and the Son of God

made the supreme sacrifice of his life. To be holy like God requires that the child of God must "*seek peace and pursue it*" (1 Pet. 3:11; Psa. 34:14) at whatever personal sacrifice.

The Character of the Christian Course

The A.V. "holiness" is too indefinite. It is translated as either "holiness" or "sanctification" throughout its use in only ten verses. The force of the word "hagiasmos" can be learned from its New Testament use.

(1) Rom. 6:19: "*for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to [the] righteousness unto holiness.*" "The righteousness", that is, that practical righteousness just before mentioned in vs. 13, is wrought out in our bodies by them being dedicated to God as His weapons in the battle against sin. Having by grace been made free from sin, we have become slaves to this righteousness. In vs. 22, this *holiness*, or sanctification, is described as a "fruit" of that dedication to God, which shows that it is not the *root* (justification), but a living growth from the root; and the end of this process is "life eternal" in full development.

(2) 1Cor. 1:30; "*Christ Jesus became unto us wisdom from God, even (te kai) righteousness, sanctification [holiness] and redemption.*" The "righteousness" concerns our standing in law before God; the "sanctification" [holiness] concerns the power to lead a holy life now, and "redemption" concerns the perfecting of the work of salvation at His coming. Here this "sanctification" [holiness] is the connecting process *between* the "righteousness" [justification] and the "redemption" [perfection], and is thus distinguished from both. Compare Eph. 5:26-27:

Ephesians 5:26-27

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

(3) The practical application of the word is shown with emphasis in 1Thess. 4:3, 4, 7 where it refers to sexual purity.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; 5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: 6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger f all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. 7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

(4) In 2Thess. 2:13 a yet deeper practical work is in view in the expression "sanctification of the spirit", that deeper inner realm which prompts and controls the dedicated body by the energy of the Holy Spirit.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

(5) 1Pet. 1:1-2 shows that the choice God made according to His foreknowledge operates "in sanctification of the spirit", (as above in 2Thess. 2:13); that is, God's choice takes effect in the realm of man's spirit as sanctified by the energy of the Holy Spirit, which leads to obedience and consecration to God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:1-2

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

These are some of the occurrences of this word, and they emphasize that it points to a *practical holiness*, which the believer is to consider altogether desirable, and therefore to cultivate with diligence - to pursue it as more to be desired than fine gold.

That the holiness here in view is not that righteousness which is imputed to the ungodly when he first places faith in Christ is clear from the very fact that the *already justified* are here exhorted to pursue it. *That* they had received as a free gift (Rom. 3:24); *this* they are to pursue.

The Goal of the Race - Seeing the Lord

Two questions arise: (1) Who is "the Lord"? and (2) What is meant by "seeing" Him?

(1) Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ it is written that before Him *"every knee shall bow"* (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10-11) and that *"every eye shall see Him"*, including those who pierced Him (Rev. 1:7). Therefore, holiness is not a prerequisite for seeing Christ.

But the title "the Lord" is definitely applied to God the Father. This usage follows the Old Testament. In Psa. 2:2 *"the Lord [Jehovah]"* is distinguished from *"His Anointed"*, which passage is quoted in Acts 4:26, followed in vs. 29, 30 by *"And now Lord... grant..., that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Thy holy Servant Jesus."* The same distinction is made in Paul's words: *"the grace of our Lord abounded*

exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:14). Christ Himself had addressed His Father as *"Lord of heaven and earth"* (Matt. 11:25); and James echoes this by speaking of *"the Lord and Father"* (Jas. 3:9).

It would therefore seem that in our passage it must be the *Father* for the sight of Whom practical holiness is essential.

(2) As to the sense of the word "see", here again the Old Testament will show what is meant.

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

Moses, Aaron, and seventy-two others, were called by God to go up into Mount Sinai, where:

Exodus 24:10
And they saw the God of Israel:

To Moses God said:

Exodus 33:22-23
And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: 3 And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

After open intercourse with an angel, Manoah:

Judges 13:22
... said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

Micaiah said to Ahab:

1 Kings 22:19
.... I saw the LORD sitting on his throne,

In all these places the Septuagint uses the same verb "to see" (horao) as in our passage. It means "to see with eyes." The very noun "eye" (in Greek) is derived from it. So that all these places show that whether it was by bodily sight or ecstatic vision, an actual sight of an actual person is meant by the term "see". In those times it is true that the Person was the Son of God; but this does not affect the sense of "to see".

Dan. 7:9 carries the matter further. Daniel said: "*I beheld till thrones were placed and One that was ancient of days did sit*", Whose appearance the prophet then described. This Ancient of days was the Father, for the Son of Man is shortly brought before Him (vs. 13).

Thus concerning this expression "see God", as for so very much else in this Epistle, there is an Old Testament background; and it creates the notion of a literal sight of a literal Person. The New Testament follows to the same effect.

Matthew 18:10
Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

1 John 3:2
Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

And of the final beatific vision in glory it is written:

Revelation 22:4

And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

As plainly as all these statements point to a face-to-face sight of God, either of the Son or the Father, there is yet another statement even more completely parallel to our present passage. It is:

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

And, as in Hebrews, this is immediately associated with peacefulness by the directly following words: "*Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called sons of God.*" The mention of sons of God shows that "God" here is the Father, and thus the Son pointed forward to a sight of the Father.

It is requisite to "seeing God" that we be clothed with a glorified, spiritual body which can endure the blaze of that uncreated light. The natural, earthly body cannot do this: "*Man shall not see Me and live*" (Exo. 33:20) for "*the blessed and only Potentate*", the Father, is "*dwelling in light unapproachable; Whom no man hath seen, nor is able to see*" (1Tim. 6:15, 16). The heirs of glory must be "*clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven*" (2Cor. 5:2), at the coming of the Lord (1Cor. 15:35-38).

The Prize of the Race is Conditional

The prospect thus opened to faith is of inconceivable sublimity. No higher honor will ever be possible. God has brought to full His resources for displaying grace, for He proposes to bring His sons to His own presence, to share the love, standing, and glory which He has granted to His own beloved Son. More than this He can never design or do, for He cannot place anyone above His Son.

But the attaining of this high dignity is *conditional* upon the development of godliness. "*Pursue the holiness apart from which no one shall see the Lord.*" The first privilege which God in His grace confers is a standing in law as justified before Him as Judge; the final privilege which that grace will grant is a standing in person before His presence as the Father of glory. Both of these privileges are *conditional*. The former is conditional upon the guilty sorrowing over his sins and humbling himself to accept the pardon of His offended Sovereign on the sole ground of the meritorious sacrifice of the Redeemer. The latter is conditional upon the justified giving diligence to advance in personal holiness.

The pathway from starting point to goal may be long and dangerous, but God is able to guard from stumbling till the goal is reached (Jude 24). And God will guard all who on their part "add all diligence" in developing, by the Spirit of Christ, the character of Christ.

2 Peter 1:10-11

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

God does not say to the ungodly "If ye do these things" you shall be *justified*; but He does say to the *justified* "If ye do these things" ye shall never stumble, and thus your entrance into the kingdom shall be noble, in place of being humble (or not at all).

Mr. Carnality and Mr. Faint-heart take comfort from Jude's assurance that God is able to guard from stumbling and set us before the presence of His glory; but they tend to not consider the state *necessary* for that august Presence, even their being "*without blemish.*" Or they wistfully suppose that God will produce in them that unblemished and unblameable state without diligence on their part. But they will be bitterly disappointed at the last. It would be wise for such to learn from present experience. If a child of God ceases to give diligence to walk in holiness, he loses that present enjoyment of the invisible presence of God which is the joy and strength of the godly. How then shall one unfit for that Presence - *now* - be found fit for His visible glory where nothing that is unclean shall in anywise enter? (Rev. 21:27). Let such therefore "wash our robes" beforehand (Rev. 22:14).

Indeed, it would be wisdom for each aspirant for that glory to ponder the Lord's words quoted above from Matt. 5:8: "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" A pure heart is one to which all that is not of God is strange and jarring. How terribly easy it is for us to indulge in the heart feelings, cravings, and purposes unknown to the heart of God, and that are strange and jarring to Him. Yet He can cleanse the heart from these if there is faith on our part, as He did the hearts of the heathen gathered in the house of Cornelius (Acts 15:9). Let us therefore, with a defiled believer of old, cry "*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me*" (Psa. 51:10). For we may be well assured that outward correctness will not by itself suffice for Him Who searcheth the heart, Who is, as Peter described Him, "*the heart-knowing God*" (Acts 15:8). A clean life must grow from a pure heart, or it will be only a plant without root, doomed to wither quickly.

One clear day an unbeliever was seen searching the sky with a telescope. Asked what he was doing, he answered: I am trying to find your God, but I cannot see Him anywhere! The fitting reply was given: And you never will, for it is written, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Most true, now and forever! A king has millions of subjects, most of whom never see him in his palace. It is the few who are counted worthy of this honor. "*Many are called, few chosen*"; "*many shall be last that are first [in opportunity and outward standing]; and first that are last*" (Matt. 19:27-20:16).

Three Perils

There are three ever-present perils against which the heir of glory must keep an ever-open eye. The elder of a church must maintain a keen watch of the shepherd over the welfare of the sheep (1Pet. 5:1-2). Likewise, so must each Christian always be "looking diligently" to guard against these dangers, lest as wolves they devastate his life before God.

(1). Falling short of the grace of God (vs. 15). In vs. 4:1 this term "*hustereo*" means to fail to attain a given privilege - the rest of God. In Rom. 3:23 it means to fail to live up to a standard - the glory of God. 1Cor. 1:7 states that the Corinthian believers did not lack any of the gifts available in Christ. Our present passage may be compared with Gal. 5:4: "*Ye are brought to nought from Christ, ye who would be justified by law; ye are fallen from grace*". You have ceased to be in the realm where grace reigns. Here our Writer does not go so far as this, but speaks only of "*falling short from (apo) the grace of God*", of not attaining to and enjoying all that grace makes possible. How many a Christian life is sadly deficient of this or that heavenly quality necessary fully to glorify God and to acquire His highest gifts.

It is the personal servant ("his own servants", Matt. 25:14), who lacks the zeal and devotion to use the pound entrusted to him while his Lord is away, of whom it is said at the Lord's return, that he must hear the solemn sentence: "*Take away from him the pound . . . from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.*" This unfaithful servant is not killed as are the enemies of his Lord, but he

pays a severe price for having fallen short of the grace of God. He did not appreciate grace in his Lord, and therefore lacked it in himself (Luke 19:24, 26, 27, 21).

(2). Bitterness (vs. 15). A feeling in the heart is like a root in the ground; it must either wither and die, or be dug out, or else it will spring up. There is no such thing in this present life as the removing from the believer of the evil soil, the carnal nature, in which evil roots grow; but the roots themselves can be eradicated by watchful and strenuous care, in the power of the Spirit of holiness.

If the heart is flooded with the love of God (Rom. 5:5), if by obedience the disciple abides in the continual enjoyment of the love of Christ (John 15:9-10), then love will kill bitterness, and the Christian will fulfill the exhortation *"Let all bitterness" with its evil fruit of wrath, anger, clamor, railing, and malice, "be put away from you"* (Eph. 4:31). Thus the root will not spring up, nor will its evil fruit mentioned cause "the many" to be defiled.

But if the child of God, by selfishness and carelessness allows bitter feelings against another to poison his heart, so that others become involved and defiled, then he is not developing that sanctification, that holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord.

(3). Sinful indulgence of the body is the third peril (vs. 16). Of this two instances are mentioned: (a) sexual sin, fornication; and (b) evil indulgence in eating. Perhaps man's most insidious snares are not acts wrong in themselves, as blasphemy or murder, but right acts done wrongly, as these here in view.

(a) Sexual intercourse is an ordinance of God for mankind within the confines of marriage, but its illicit indulgence is a crime of first magnitude, of which it is written plainly (and to Christians), that *"the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified"* (1Thess. 4:1-8); that is, God Himself sees to the execution of the penalty.

This vice is universal still, even as it was when Paul was writing. The craving of the individual is aggravated by the ease of indulgence in these perilous times, and the general consent of the world dulls the conscience, even of Christians. In Christ the child of God is elevated to a purer moral region and is given moral power by which to escape *"from the corruption that is in the world by lust"* (2 Pet. 1:3, 4); but let him watch and pray, lest he enter into temptation, for the higher the standing the deeper the fall; and a brother in the family of God in Corinth had fallen lower than even the debased heathen would tolerate (1Cor. 5:1).

This vileness was an aggravation of the sin of Reuben. He indulged once with his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22); the Corinthian Christian was living habitually with his father's wife. And the atmosphere was infectious; there was the deadly danger of the whole church becoming leavened (1Cor. 5:2, 6). Reuben paid the severe penalty that he lost his priority, his dignities as the firstborn in the family (Gen. 49:3, 4); this Corinthian was in imminent danger of losing his life by judicial action through Satan [though secure of his salvation in the day of the Lord Jesus (1Cor. 5:3-5)]. It appears that he repented promptly and the sentence was cancelled (2Cor. 2: 5-11).

The most persuasive argument on this urgent topic is found in 1Cor. 6:12-20. Its conclusion is that we should *"Flee fornication"* and glorify God in our body (vs. 18, 20).

(b) Profanity (vs. 16-17). The profanity of Esau's mind was shown in that he esteemed a temporary gratification of his belly above the noble permanent privileges ordained of God. He *"despised his*

birthright" (Gen. 25:34). It is a vigorous word here used, the one which describes the contempt with which carnal men treated the Son of man: "*He was despised and rejected*" (Isa. 53:3), "*a reproach of men and despised of the people*" (Psa. 22:6). The Septuagint gives a word (phaulizo) which means that Esau regarded the birthright as paltry, a mere trifle; and so he sold it, he bartered it away for a trifle.

The Greek word "apodidimi" translated here as "sold" implies that the article sold is one's own, an important point to observe. It shows that Esau was not a mere pretender to the birthright, nor self-deceived on the matter. He was Isaac's legitimate elder son, and therefore the birthright was his by law of primogeniture. Therefore he cannot be taken here as a type of a mere *professor* of Christianity, or one self-deceived as to his relationship to Christ. A person cannot be warned not to lose or sell a birthright to which he has no title whatever. Esau can be here only a type of a real child of God, one who is the true holder of the birthright. He did not have to acquire this dignity, for the title to it was his by birth; but he did need to value it and retain it; and because he did neither, he forfeited it.

"Birthright" is a plural term in both Gen. 25:31, 34 and in our passage, "ta prototokia". It should be rendered "the rights of the firstborn", for these were three.

(1) The firstborn son was ruler of the household under and for the father. Thus David's elder brother "commanded" his younger brother to attend the family sacrifice at Bethlehem, which fact David and Jonathan considered should be adequate reason for absence from the table of even the king (1 Sam. 20:29).

(2) This shows also that the eldest son acted as the family priest, for he is shown acting as chief on occasion of a family sacrifice.

(3) By the law of God the firstborn received a double share of the father's estate (Deut. 21:17); that is, if there were six heirs, the patrimony was divided into seven portions of which the firstborn took two.

No alien, no bastard, no pretender had any rights here; and so the legitimate sons of Gilead drove Jephthah out of the house, because he was the son of a harlot, saying, "*Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of another woman*" (Judges 11:1,2).

God keeps a full register of all His universal family (Luke 10:20; Rev. 13:8; etc.), and therein some are entered as being "firstborn." The reference is probably to the registers kept at the temple in Jerusalem. Who in a numerous family was the firstborn son could be settled beyond controversy, for each such had to be presented to God in the temple (Exo. 13:2, 11; Luke 2:21-24). God has the names of His firstborn sons duly recorded as such in His register in heaven.

The three above-mentioned rights typify most accurately the triple dignities of the firstborn sons of God who are being brought unto His glory. For they are to rule the universe as kings; to serve as priests, mediating the merits of Christ's redemption and so aiding the intercourse of man with God; and theirs is the rich heavenly portion, instead of only earthly blessedness. They do not have to acquire the title to these privileges; they hold it, for it is a gift that the grace of God has attached to their calling; even as the sons of Abraham did not have to acquire a title to Canaan. But we, as those of old, do have to value these privileges and so walk and so fight as to get possession and keep it, and as they lost their birthright, so we *may forfeit ours*.

Of this royal dignity, the "crown" is the symbol: therefore the warning: *"hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown"* (Rev. 3:11), as Jacob took the birthright that Esau despised.

Other Old Testament passages make clear that the birthright was forfeitable. 1Chron. 26:10 mentions that Shimri was the chief of a certain family of Levites (*"for though he was not the firstborn, yet his father made him chief"*). This shows that the essential idea of being "firstborn" is priority of rank, not accident of birth; which is the force of Col. 1:15 that Christ is *"the firstborn of all creation"*, not meaning that He was the first to be born and so had a beginning, but that He owns and rules the whole universe by the appointment of His Father (see Heb. 1:2).

1Chron. 5:1-2 (and see Gen. 49:3-4) applies this forfeitableness of the birthright to Reuben, *"forasmuch as he defiled his father's couch."* The ruler's staff went to his brother Judah, *"of him came the prince"* (Gen. 49:10); the priesthood went to Levi; and the double inheritance was given to Joseph, whose sons Ephraim and Manasseh each became a tribe in Israel. Here also the one who was the first to be born did not become the firstborn as to rank, for Jacob *"set Ephraim before Manasseh"* (Gen. 48:8-20).

Thus from the case of Esau the Writer again warns his brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling (ch. 3:1), that the noblest gifts offered in Christ may be missed, and moreover, *will* be missed if things earthly and present are valued more than things heavenly and future, or if the body is gratified at the expense of the spirit. This last was the sin of our first mother Eve: she forfeited fellowship with God by a false gratifying of the body - by eating wrongly. The spirit succumbed, the body dominated, and thus it has been with all her children. God sets us free from this slavery to the body by redemption and regeneration. It is for each believer to imitate Paul: *I buffet my body, and enslave it lest by any means, after that I as a herald have called others into the race, I myself should be disapproved and refused the crown* (1Cor. 9:27).

The Loss Is Irrecoverable

The case of Esau shows, indeed, that the sin, which involves so serious loss, is not casual or unintentional, but deliberate. When Jacob proposed the cunning bargain, Esau turned it over in his mind, briefly but sufficiently: *"Behold, I am about to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me?"* The compact was made the more conscious and deliberate by Jacob demanding that it be confirmed by oath (Gen. 25:31, 33). Thus Esau did not lose his rights by accident or mistake, but by compact; he sold the birthright with his eyes wide open to what he was doing.

This greatly aggravated his guilt and rendered the position irreversible in two major elements.

First, Esau never after really changed his mind or was sorrowful for his willful sin in this matter. Gen. 27:34, 36 shows him blaming Jacob, not reproaching himself. He mourned his loss, but not his sin. In this also he proved himself a true son of his first parents, for Eve and Adam each blamed another for their guilty conduct. In each of the three cases there was a measure of truth, for those others blamed were in part responsible; but godly sorrow for sin seeks no such shelter, but accepts its own responsibility and is humble. Esau neither showed nor sought this change of mind.

Secondly, Esau's act had been ratified by God, and Isaac as a prophet was moved to give to Jacob the blessing that attached to the rights of the firstborn, and his God-inspired prophetic utterance could not be recalled. Esau's cupidity sought the blessing that, by his own act and deed, was no longer rightly his; but

his bitter tears could not avail to change Isaac's mind: *"he found no place for a change of mind in his father"* (ASV).

This is a picture of Kadesh Barnea enacted in advance in a single individual. When Israel stubbornly refused to accept the privilege available to them, God withdrew the possibility of gaining it. Thus comes to pass that which is depicted in the Parable of the Talents concerning the wicked and slothful servant:

Matthew 25:29

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hat

How urgently does Esau bring home to each as an individual the earnest exhortations of ch. 3:12 that we must each *"Take heed"* that there be no *"falling away from the living God"*, and that of 4:1, *"Let us fear lest haply . . . any one of you should seem to have come short."*

The forfeitability of the birthright is further indicated and emphasized in the case of Reuben. Being Jacob's eldest son this honor was his; but because of his yielding to an unnatural sensual craving, it was taken from him (1 Chron. 5:1), and was given, as to the territory, to the sons of Joseph; the latter thus, in his children, receiving the double portion; and as to sovereignty, to the tribe of Judah, in the person of David and his sons, including Messiah; and as to the priesthood, to Levi. Was this in the Writer's mind when he specified in our passage the sin of fornication?

Yet Reuben remained in the family, and was blessed in measure; but as concerning that the rights in question if once lost cannot be regained, we should remember that in the days of the future *earthly* kingdom the status created by Reuben's misconduct will still abide: the King will be of the house of Judah, the priesthood in Israel will be in the family of Zadok the Levite (Ezek. 48:11), and Ephraim and Manasseh will hold their double portion. These things Reuben lost forever, though forever remaining of the house of Israel, and sharing a portion, though this portion will be of ordinary and not special degree. All this is seen by comparing the final and prophetic announcements of Jacob (Gen. 49:1-4) and Moses (Deut. 33:6); for Jacob declared that the dignity of the firstborn with its preeminence and power belonged to Reuben, yet should not be his, not even in the latter days; yet Moses guaranteed life to the tribe, but nothing more: *"Let Reuben live, and not die; yet let his men be few."*

Please take note that Mal. 1:2-5 does not deny that in Heb. 12 Esau is a type of a child of God today, but rather establishes it. For Esau is there called "Jacob's brother." as in full fact he was. Now in Heb. 11:9, 21 Jacob is cited as a man of faith, a sample of all such, and therefore as a child of God. His "brother" therefore cannot in Malachi typify an unregenerate man or Jacob also must be so, for they are of the same family.

It also should be stressed that Heb. 11:20 shows, as does the history in Gen. 27:39-40, that Esau received definite blessings, though inferior to those of the firstborn son. He is therefore not a type of the unregenerate, who are not related to the regenerate, and who are under the curse and wrath of God (Gal. 3:10; John 3:36); but he typifies one who has forfeited priority and privilege, though retaining some measure of blessing.

Thus did the men of war forfeit Canaan and fell in the wilderness, though God in grace treated them as still of the redeemed family and did the best He could for them in the desert (Isa. 63:9, 14).

Love in God is not impaired by the weak partiality which often infects human love, nor is hatred in Him vitiated by that evil bitterness which makes it wicked in man. In God both are harmonious with His holy preference for piety and holy abhorrence of impiety. It is in this sense only that He "loved" Jacob and "hated" Esau.

It should also be observed that in Malachi it is Esau in his *posterity*, Edom, rather than in his own person, on whom because of their wickedness the judgments are inflicted, and to whom God's holy "hatred" is shown.

Of Esau himself the history gives, as the final picture, a man who has risen above his earlier hatred of his brother, welcomes him back with love, is ready to protect him and his substance (Gen. 32 and 33), and who at last joins him at the graveside of their father (Gen. 35:29). Thus is he a type of one of the family of God who lapses into carnality and bitterness, but years after is restored in soul, yet who nevertheless cannot regain the full position and priority originally owned. He is the first that shall be last, though still in the family.

This is the force of Rom. 8:16, 17: *"we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs [indeed] of God, but joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified with Him."* For every child, however wayward, inherits something from the Father - His life, nature, love, with food, clothing, training; but sharing with the Firstborn in glory is conditional.

The Tenth Warning

Hebrews 12:25-29

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape [penalty at the Judgment Seat], if we turn away [apostasize] from him that speaketh from heaven: 26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

With this awesome prophecy of what is to come in the heavenlies, the mighty argument has reached its climax and it now moves to its conclusion.

Emphatic Recapitulation

"See to it that you do not reject the One speaking: for if those rejecting the one who passed on divine instruction on earth did not escape [penalty], much more [shall not] we, [that is] those turning away from the One from the heavens".

This summarizes the appeal of 10:26-31. To defy Moses was to incur severe penalties; yet he was only an earthly messenger of God, who offered blessings connected with the earth and denounced penalties to be inflicted on earth. But the Messenger now speaking is the Son of God, the Lord from heaven (1:1-2), and as such He is nobler than Moses, even as the son is greater than the servant (3:1-4), Whose message opens to faith the sublime privileges laid up in the heavens and warns of penalties more severe than those under the law of Moses.

Now these privileges are based upon that atoning blood which speaks to God in the heavenly sanctuary (vs. 24 above). To turn from that blood and this Speaker (see 10:29), by reverting to the law, with its mediator, Moses, and its but typical blood, is to reject the bright reality and return to the shadow. He who thus rejects the heavenly shall pay a severer penalty than he who rejected the earthly.

From this there is no possible escape. In every place in the New Testament this word "escape" has its natural force – "ek-pheugo", to flee out of a place or trouble and be quite clear thereof. It comes only at Luke 21:36; Acts 16:27; 19:16; Rom. 2:3; 2Cor. 11:33; 1 Thess. 5:3; Heb. 2:3, and here. In comparison with Rom. 2:3 see its use in the Septuagint in the interpolated passage after Esther. 8:13: *"they suppose that they shall escape the sin-hating vengeance of the ever-seeing God"*; also Judges 6:11; Job 15:30; Pro. 10:19. The sense is invariably as stated. One is either completely free from the penalty or completely involved in it, which latter shall certainly be the experience of the one who turns away from the heavenly Speaker.

But the Writer's words (vs. 25) require strict understanding. It is again shown that it is not sin by ignorance or inadvertence that is in view. He emphasizes his words found at 10:26 - that it is if we sin "willfully", deliberately, knowing what we are doing and adhering to that decision, that the warning operates. Those who rejected Moses did so on definite occasions and maintained the disobedience; and the Christians here are warned not to do likewise; and this "turning away" is not a thoughtless act that is soon mourned thereafter, but it is continuous and deliberate.

While this limits the sin in view, yet the form of his sentence emphasizes again that it is Christians who are being warned. He does not use a general or indefinite expression, as, *"such as turn away"* shall suffer, but He employs again the specific and emphatic *"we, that is, those of us who are turning away"*, for this was precisely what some of the Christian circle were doing or about to do; and which some have done all the centuries since.

The Past

The heinousness of such apostasy, such turning away, arises from the majesty of Him from whom one turns. At court it was an unpardonable insult for one to turn his back upon the king, especially should he be speaking. And the One from whom the apostate turns is of incomparable majesty. When of old Sinai's mighty mass heard the voice of Jehovah *"the whole mount quaked greatly"* (Exo. 19:18), as it is said in our passage (vs. 26), *"Whose voice then shook the earth."*

The Future

Yet that awesome display of His power is but a trifle as compared with what He will do hereafter; for *"now hath He promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this, 'Yet once more,' signifieth the removing of those things which are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain."*

(1). The Speaker from heaven is the same Person as He Whose voice shook Sinai. Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. The Legislator is the Redeemer, the Redeemer remains the Legislator.

(2). The warnings are promises: *"He hath promised"* to shake earth and heaven, and He will keep His promise, whether of mercy or of wrath. Compare 2 Tim. 2:11-13.

(3). The future disturbances of nature will test the heavenly regions as well as the earth.

(4). The period for this is significant, and is easily learned from Hag. 2:6-9 from whence the promise is quoted. The whole prophecy reads:

Haggai 2:6-9

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; 7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. 9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

(a). The subject is the house of God at Jerusalem. The Jews who had returned from Babylon were building the second temple. To the old among these the prophet addresses the question: "*Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do you see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing?*" (Hag. 2:3). Thus did God identify this second and smaller temple with that former and nobler temple, speaking of "*this house in its former glory.*" It is then added: "*the precious things of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts*", [the precious things being the silver and the gold next mentioned.] In consequence, "*the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts.*"

Now it is clear that these promises have not yet been fulfilled. Herod the Great did indeed enlarge and adorn that second temple, but it never approached the magnificence of Solomon's temple. There must therefore be built in Jerusalem in days to come a temple grander than even the first. This is the consistent prediction of all Scripture, as Zech. 6:12, 13; 14:20, 21 (Zechariah spoke at the same time as Haggai): Psa. 24, esp. vs. 3; Isa. 66:22-24; Ezek. 20:40-48; etc. The suggestion that all these and other passages, in the Old Testament and the New Testament, find fulfillment in the present spiritual house of God, the church, empties Scripture of any definite meaning or accomplishment; indeed, it sets aside the plain force of the Word of God.

The three-fold "*this house*" of Haggai definitely identifies the second temple with the first, and the third and future temple with the first and second: in God's view they are all one house. This compels the view that the third must be as literal as its predecessors with which it is identified and must stand upon the same site at Jerusalem.

(b). This future temple is to be built by Messiah, "*the man Whose name is the Branch*", Who "*shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne*" (Zech. 6:12, 13). The era is therefore that of the millennial reign of Christ.

(c). This is confirmed by the feature that "*all nations*" shall be disturbed: "*I will shake all nations.*" Compare Jer. 25:26, 29-33, where judgment is denounced five times against "*all the inhabitants of the earth.*" See also Ezek. 39:21; Zech. 14:2; Matt. 25:32; Psa. 75:3, 8; all pointing to the time of Christ's coming in judgment.

(d). Other scriptures speak of this shaking of all nature as to take place at that epoch.

Isa. 2:19, 21 speaks twice of Jehovah arising *"to shake mightily the earth."* Isa. 13:13 says: *"Therefore I will make the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of its place, in the wrath of Jehovah of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger."* See also Isa. 24:1, 19, 20; Joel 2:10, 11; Nah. 1:3-6. Also the Lord foretold in detail the same disturbances that will occur in connection with His return in glory, saying that *"the powers of the heavens shall be shaken"* (Matt. 24:29) as well as there will be *"roaring of the sea and the billows"* (Luke 21:25-26; see also Psa. 46:1-3), which dread panorama the Revelation expands in lurid fullness (ch. 6:12-16; chs. 8, 9, and 16) as ushering in the reign of Christ on earth.

(e). This shaking is not, however, the final cataclysm of the purifying wrath of God which will come at the close of the Millennium, for that will not be only a shaking of heaven and earth but a dissolving of their very elements, and the agency will be fervent fire, not merely agitation. This shaking referred to in this passage is to be at the opening of the kingdom era, not at its close.

(f). The shaking here foretold is to be the final occasion when God will use this form of testing and judgment. Earth and heaven were agitated when God came to Sinai (Exo. 19:18; Judges 5:4, 5; Psa. 77:16-20; 114). These frequent mentions over many centuries indicate how terrific was that disturbance of nature and how deeply its lesson was impressed on pious men.

But the coming shaking shall far exceed that in extent and degree, for the heavens shall be involved, and the effect shall be *"the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain"* (vs. 27). Then shall be fulfilled Psa. 93:1: *"Jehovah reigneth. . . . The world also is established, that it cannot be moved."*

A Vital Principle

Here is announced a vital principle, a fundamental necessity. If a building is to be permanent, weak materials and constructions must be removed. In the kingdom of God there arose of old sin and its inevitable weakness, and ever since there has developed more and more the need that this shall be eliminated. Hence the shakings and shatterings known in individual experience by the people of God; hence the perpetual attacks of Satan and the world upon the churches of God; hence the ceaseless overthrowing of all human institutions; hence that coming overturning of the government of heaven and earth by angels - all things must be shaken terribly so that the base and weak elements may collapse and make room for that which is divine, holy, stable.

This is the proper force of the word "metathesis" translated as "removed." It signifies the substituting of one thing by another, as a name, an opinion, or an institution. This is exhibited in ch. 7:12, which speaks of the substitution of the new priesthood and law in place of the Mosaic, using this word and its root. And this shows the sense of the phrase *"as of things that have been made."* For "poieo" does not here refer to the original creation of the substance of things, or the passage would require a new thought evidently foreign to it, even that all things would be "removed", whether good or bad, strong as well as weak. But the statement as given is that some things are to be shaken and "removed" in order that other things, being unshakable, may remain. Yet these last have been "made" in the sense of being created.

Therefore, the word "poieo" has here the sense of existing things being arranged and instituted in certain relations to each other. It is not the annihilation of substance that is in view, but the annulling of relationships and the substituting of different relationships and institutions, suitable to the kingdom of God and capable of being everlasting.

Of these new institutions the principal will be that overthrowing of the existing angelic government, and the installing of the Son of man and His heavenly people in place of them, which has been before considered elsewhere.

And this is the force of the statement before us that believers are in process of "*receiving a kingdom*" (vs. 28). What this means may be learned from Dan. 5:31: "*Darius the Mede received the kingdom*", where the Septuagint uses the same terms as in our passage. Or one may consider Mordecai's question to the queen: "*Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*" (Esther 4:14).

Summary of all the Warnings

Thus the period of this shaking, as well as its accompaniment and results, show that the millennial epoch and kingdom are in view. This final warning is therefore in harmony with the earlier warnings. In ch. 2 the "*great salvation*" is the heavenly prospects of the disciples of Christ who attain to the first resurrection. In chapters 3 and 4 Canaan is used as a foreshadowing of the millennial rest, which will be entered by only the diligent. In ch. 6 the forfeiting of Canaan warns of the peril that apostasy from Christ may result in forfeiture of that heavenly portion. This is yet more heavily enforced in ch. 10, and positive penalties are added to the negative loss of glory. And here in ch. 12 the prospect of receiving a kingdom is the ground for being stable as believers, seeing that only such shall abide the testings and meet the requirements of that great day, and that the penalty of instability, of not heeding and obeying the One speaking from heaven, is inescapable (vs. 25).

Exhortation

"*Let us have grace.*" Upon what, therefore, shall the Christian concentrate so as to avoid the perils and secure his privileges? The Writer answers - upon GRACE. The danger underlying all dangers, against which he preeminently warns, is that of turning back from grace to law, ceremonies, or self-effort as the basic principle of life. The urgent call is to trust in God as "the God of all grace", for it is in this character that He has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ, and it is on this principle of grace that He undertakes to see us through the sufferings of the journey and perfect, stablish, and strengthen us (1 Pet. 5:10). This wholly unmerited and entirely adequate favor of God is made available in Christ His Son and only in Him. It is by reliance upon Him in His various offices and service that the believer acquires in daily experience "*all things that pertain unto life and godliness*" (2 Pet. 1:3).

Therefore let faith adhere to this as the principle of all dealings with God, for so, and only so, shall we be able to "*offer service well-pleasing to God*" (vs. 28). To be well-pleasing to Him is the indispensable matter as regards attaining to what grace makes possible in Christ (ch. 11:5, 6); and for this, faith and its fruits are the secret, and "dead works" are to be wholly renounced (9:14).

But living by the grace of our holy God is a serious matter. A just appreciation of His marvelous grace to us godless and guilty sinners produces "*reverence and awe*" (vs. 28). Let the Christian look steadily and long at these words "reverence and awe." They are a New Testament form of this Old Testament promise: "*to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My word*" (Isa. 66:2). It is with such that God dwells and whose spirit He revives, so that they do not collapse under the strain of life (Isa. 57:15).

Too truly has it been said that the present age, in religion as in things secular, is marked by specific levity instead of specific gravity. Therefore does our Writer remind us that grace produces reverence and awe,

not frivolity and flippancy; and therefore does he close this exhortation with the reminder that *"our God is a consuming fire"*, which must and will burn up all that is not suitable to His holiness and glory.

The intense word "consume" - "katanalisko" - the Writer borrowed from the Greek Old Testament he so much used. It means to devour completely, to dissolve. He quotes from Deut. 4:24, where, warning Israel against forgetfulness of their God, and the resulting substitution of something else as the object of their hearts, Moses said, *"For Jehovah thy God is a devouring fire, a jealous God."* Now jealousy is an outcome of love. A man does not feel jealous that a woman he does not love should give herself to some other man. It is God's love of holiness that makes Him to burn against sin. It is His love for His people that compels Him to consume out of them all that is contrary to Himself and to their true welfare. If we respond to His grace, tremble at His word, serve Him with reverence and awe, then He will rejoice in us and we in Him; but if we provoke Him to jealousy with our vanities then must we learn by painful (yet, at the last, salutary) experience, that *"our God is a consuming fire"*, even as was before shown at ch. 10:27.

Therefore, because we have the possibility of being rewarded and receiving such a kingdom, let us serve God with reverence and godly fear (the fear that we may lose this privilege).

So we see that God is indeed very serious about warning the believer of the consequences of ignoring "so Great Salvation".

THE COMING JUDGMENT OF THE CHURCH

The judgment of Israel by God at the entrance to the promised land is a type of the Judgment Seat of Christ as recorded in 1Cor. 3:11-15. Only those who have works of gold, silver, and precious stones will gain the reward. However, to determine this, every Christian will undergo the test of fire. If he has works of wood, hay, or stubble, they will burn up – but if they are of gold, silver, and precious stones, they will survive. The works that are perishable in the fire are works of the world, the flesh, and Satan. Whereas, the works that are imperishable are those that the Holy Spirit accomplishes through us. Gold always is emblematic of deity (the coming kingship of Christ), while silver represents redemption (the saviorship of Jesus on the Cross), and precious stones the power (the Lordship of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit) to produce spiritual fruit in the life of the believer who allows Him to control his life.

Finally, notice in 1 Cor 3:15 that those who will suffer loss will not be saved at that time (soul salvation): "but he himself shall be saved as by (through) fire". In the Greek, this salvation is in the "future passive" (shall be). That is to say, his soul will not be saved at this time, but will be in the future (after the millennium). The fire is literal. The Outer Darkness is discussed in a later chapter.

But Exhort One Another Daily

Right in the middle of the spiritual lessons drawn from the type, the Spirit of God commands Christians,

Hebrews 3:13

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

In Heb. 10:23-25 the same command is restated after a slightly different fashion in connection with Christians assembling together. In verse twenty-three, Christians are exhorted, "*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith [lit., 'the confession of our hope'] without wavering.*" (Of the 54 uses of this Greek word, 53 of them are translated as "hope"). Then, in the following two verses, Christians are told to "*consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works...exhorting one another*"; and Christians are to conduct their affairs among one another after this fashion "*so much the more*" as they "*see the day approaching* [that coming day when one's present hope will be realized]."

Contextually, in Hebrews, chapter ten, a central purpose for Christians assembling together (really, *the central purpose* in the text) - "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...*" (v. 25) - is with a view to exhorting one another relative to the hope of our calling (vs. 23, 25). And to do this, Christians would have to be knowledgeable, after some fashion, concerning this hope. They would have to talk about and discuss this hope with one another, for there could be no exhortation apart from some type knowledge of the facts surrounding the Christians' calling.

In other words, in the light of Heb. 3:13; 10:23-25, Christians are to assemble together with a view to talking about and discussing among themselves the things surrounding their calling. They are to talk about that land out ahead (that heavenly land), the enemy therein (Satan and his angels), the necessity of present victory over the enemy (through the spiritual warfare), and the hope set before us (the hope of one day occupying that land with the "King of kings, and the Lord of lords" as Christ and Christians ascend the throne together [replacing Satan and his angels] and exercise the rights of the firstborn).

And, with these things in view, Christians are to spend time exhorting one another ("daily" in the text [3:13]) *relative to the importance of keeping their eyes fixed on the goal out ahead*; and they are to carry on an interchange with one another after this fashion *so much the more* as they "see the day approaching." And that's exactly where we are today - at a time when Christians should be exhorting one another "so much the more", for we are living very near the end of the present dispensation, very near the end of man's allotted six days (6,000 years), immediately prior to the fast-approaching seventh day (the Lord's Day, the Messianic Era, to last 1,000 years).

But are Christians assembling together today with this purpose in view? Hardly! Christians, by and large, know little to nothing about this whole matter. This is not something which they talk about or discuss; nor, much less, is it something which is uppermost in their thoughts, governing their actions. Consequently, Christians are assembling together today for purposes which completely ignore that which is stated in Heb. 10:23-25. That's how complete the leaven has done its damaging work.

Are conditions going to improve? Are Christians going to one day wake up? Alas; not during the present dispensation! The dispensation will, according to Scripture, end in total apostasy; and that's exactly the direction in which the Church continues, after a rapid fashion, to move today. The Church continues to move in a direction which is carrying it completely away from "the faith" which it held universally during the first century.

Christ's statement, "till the whole was leavened" (Matt. 13:33), and His companion statement that at the time of His return He would not find "the faith on the earth" (Luke 18:8), must be taken at face value. Christ, in His omniscience, knowing the future as well as the past and present, stated exactly what would occur within the Church during the dispensation. After two millennia, at the end of the dispensation, the leavening process would be so complete that, correspondingly, the message surrounding "the faith"

would no longer be heard in the Churches. And the Church as a whole would be, as the Laodicean Church in Rev. 3:14-21, "...wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

The Warnings of our Lord

The following is a list of warnings and threats given by our Lord to all believers seeking to enter the kingdom. They are in addition to the list which was given previously in this book. Every Christian who offends in them (both lists) and fails to repent of them will be in danger of being excluded from the kingdom. I point them out to you, so that you may govern your walk and life with the Lord as to make your entrance into the kingdom an *abundant* entrance (2Peter 1:11).

In 2 Cor 13:5, the Scripture says we should:

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.

Evidences of "the corruption that is in the world through lust":

- (1) For angry words (Matt. 5:21-22)
- (2) Envious and quarrelsome (Matt. 18:1-4)
- (3) Judging (Matt. 7:1-2)
- (4) Deniers of Christ through fear (Luke 12:4-5)
- (5) Resisters of civil authority (Rom. 13:2)
- (6) Disturbers of Churches (1Cor. 3:16-17; Gal. 5:10)
- (7) Those who abide not in Christ (John 15:1-6)
- (8) Ashamed of Christ (Matt. 18:38)
- (9) Hand or eye causing stumbling (Matt. 5:27-30)
- (10) The unforgiving
- (11) The unfaithful steward (Matt. 24:48-51)
- (12) Causer of stumbling to little ones (Mark 9:41-50)
- (13) Disobedient (Luke 12:47-48)
- (14) Corrupters of revelation (Rev. 22:18-19)
- (15) Refusers to listen to Christ (Heb. 12:25-29)
- (16) Slothful servants (Matt. 25:14-30)
- (17) Adulterers (Rev. 2:22-23; Heb. 13:4)
- (18) Unwatchful (Rev. 3:3; 16:15)
- (19) Wrong-doers (Col. 3:22; 4:1)
- (20) Unclean (1Thess. 4:3-7)
- (21) Defrauders and many other characters (1Cor. 6:1-10)

May the Lord give us wisdom and understanding to continually confess these terrible sins and to repent and turn back to the enabling grace of God that can bring us into the kingdom.

2 Peter 1:3-4

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Three Orders of the Resurrection

The resurrection occurs in three major orders, and thus at three separate times (Consider our discussion of the Keys of Three). These orders will show the time in the past of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the times in the future of the resurrection of all believers of the Old and New Testament into their eternal glorified bodies of flesh and bones. For just as Jesus' body of flesh and bones was raised (having no blood but animated by the Holy Spirit), so will the bodies of all those who have part in the Resurrection of the Just.

1 Corinthians 15:22-26

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming ²⁴ Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

In this, our opening text, the Holy Spirit instructs us that this "harvest" (the resurrection of saints of the Old and New Testament) has *three* divisions to it. Our Lord calls them *orders*. Orders refer to different companies in which men are raised. They are listed in our text as:

- (1) Christ the firstfruits;
- (2) Afterward, they that are Christ's at His coming.
- (3) Then *cometh* the end (the end of the millennium)..." Note: the word *cometh* is not in the original Greek text, and is probably shown in italics if you have a King James Bible. There should not be a period at the end of vs. 23, because vs. 23 and vs. 24 are all one sentence.

As we progress in this chapter of study, it is important that you keep these three *orders* distinct in your thinking.

FIRST ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION

The first order of this resurrection is revealed by our text as "Christ the firstfruits". The title of the firstfruits is plural which indicates more than one. To understand why this is so, we need to go back and take a further look at the law of the harvest that we were first introduced to in Chapter Twelve. As we continue our study here, remember that the Levitical laws that govern the harvest of Israel are also examples, or *types*. These are given by the Holy Spirit to the believers of the Church age, that we may learn several truths - among which are the truths of the resurrection.

Leviticus 23:10-11

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of

your harvest unto the priest: 11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

Here God tells Moses that at the harvest of Israel's first crops, to instruct that *one* sheaf from the firstfruits was to be brought into the priest. The priest would then wave it before the Lord to be accepted for Israel. Also, this was to be done on Sunday, not Saturday. Sunday is the first day of the week, the day Jesus arose from the grave.

This instruction to Moses was written for our admonition (1Cor. 10:11) and is a perfect spiritual pattern (type) teaching that the sheaf of the firstfruits represented the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The acceptance of this sheaf by God, for Israel, was the evidence of God's approval of His death for our sins.

Some would say the rest of the firstfruits are the certain saints of the Old Testament who came out of their graves, and went into the holy city and showed themselves in Matthew:

Matthew 27:52-53

And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

However, I disagree with this assumption, because in the book of Hebrews, verse 11:40 specifically states:

Hebrews 11:39-40

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Therefore, according to the above verse, no Old Testament saint will be given his resurrected body until we all (Old and New Testament saints) receive ours together at the same general time (the time of His appearing). Apparently, these who came out of the grave died a natural death again, just as Lazarus must have died again. That no one but Jesus presently has a resurrection body is further verified by this verse:

1 Timothy 6:16

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Others would say this group represents the 144,000 seen in Revelation 14:1-4, since this group is described as being the "*firstfruits unto God and the Lamb*". I disagree with this assumption, because this clearly does not happen until during the tribulation period after the 6th trumpet (the 2nd woe). Rather, these 144,000 are the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb *from the nation Israel*. Moreover, to try to make the group of 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7:4 any other than the same 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 14:1-4 stretches the limits of credulity as to why two groups in this rather short book would number 144,000 each and not be the same group. This would be illogical; the Rev. 14 group clearly shows what became of the Rev.7:4 group; to make it otherwise destroys the continuity of a book that Jesus declares Himself to be the story of "the things which must be hereafter (Rev. 4:1). What would be the purpose of mentioning a group of 144,000 and then not relating what finally became of them?

Therefore, to try to make any group the "firstfruits" other than the Lord Jesus Christ on the day He was resurrected is stretching Scripture to fit doctrine. The Scripture clearly says that Christ is the firstfruits. Why should we argue the point?

THE SECOND ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION

The second order of the resurrection found in our text is recorded as "...afterward, they that are Christ's at His coming" (1Cor. 15:23b). The second order is the antitype of the whole harvest of grain (except for the corners) found in Leviticus 23:22. In the New Testament, this is known as the "first resurrection".

Who are these, "they that are Christ's" at His coming? Perhaps the following verses will shed a little light on this subject:

Galatians 5:16-24

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh 7 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

In the above verses, we see, first of all, that if we "walk in the Spirit", we "shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh". Obviously, we have this choice. If we walk after the flesh, then, we will produce the "works of the flesh" listed beginning in verse 19. Then Paul informs us that if we do these things, that is, *practice these things as a lifestyle*, we shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Thus we see that those believers who choose to *save their lives* here on earth, and thus fulfill the lusts of the flesh, will *lose their lives* at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and will accordingly forfeit their inheritance, and *suffer loss*.

Then we see an interesting deliniation of "they that are Christ's" – these are identified as those who have "crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (*lost their lives here*)". Thus we see that, in the strictest sense of the word, a person can be born again, and still not meet this all-important *classification*. We are all His sheep, but do all His sheep follow Him? For surely there are many Christians who walk in the flesh, and do practice these things, as we all have observed in our own Christian circles. Furthermore, if it were not possible for Christians to *practice* these things, then there would have been no need for Paul to give this warning.

And indeed, these, and only these - who have been judged to gain Salvation of the Soul at the Judgment Seat - are classified as "they that are Christ's", and are awarded their glorified resurrection bodies at this time. "At His coming" encompasses the entire seven year period of tribulation beginning with the pre-tribulation, first-fruits rapture of those saints who are the "faithful and wise servants" and the "five wise virgins" and continuing until His actual physical coming on earth. At that time, the tribulation saints that had been martyred during the seven years will be awarded their resurrection bodies.

Referring back to our verse in 1Cor. 15:22: the Scripture says "afterward". The word "afterward" in this verse means a period of time after the firstfruits of the harvest. And so far, it has been around 2,000 years. Nevertheless, when these raptures do occur, all of the bodies of this order of believers will come up out of the grave, or (if living at the time) be translated into the air. That is, they will be in the same flesh and blood body they lived in upon the earth. These bodies, both raised and translated, will be caught up to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Here, they will appear before Christ Himself, and each believer will be judged on the basis of the works done in their bodies after they were saved (2Cor. 5:10). Every thought, motive and action will be taken into account.

Traditional theology maintains a different view than this. They teach that every believer will come up out of the grave, or be translated, with a glorified, immortal body likened unto the body of Christ. However, the apostle uses no such wording when he described the rapture - only the words "raised" and "caught up". But you may ask, "doesn't 1Cor. 15:51-53 teach about the rapture"? The answer is, no! The rapture and the resurrection are not the same event. Again, you may ask, "then, when are believers going to have glorified, incorruptible, immortal bodies"? The answer is: *after* the Judgment Seat of Christ. However, not all who are raptured are privileged to have this kind of body...at that time. Only the second order - those who inherit the kingdom. The rest will suffer loss (they will die again; the second death - literally "lose their life") for a thousand years. Then, after this time, they will be resurrected into a spiritual body, based on the Cross and the loss of their souls for a thousand years (thus qualifying for, and fulfilling the principle of Salvation of the Soul in order to merit such out-resurrection). This will be at the end of the millennium.

Many have erred by teaching that all who will be raptured will be in the Kingdom of Heaven. If this were the case, there would be no need for judgment, because all believers would be co-heirs automatically. No! Rapture is for the purpose of raising up the believer in order to go to *court*! It is here that he must stand in his raised body (based on the redemptive work of Christ), to give an account for all things done in his body (2Cor. 5:10) since he was saved. Here, the evidence of works, whether good or evil, is presented, along with the actual body in which these works were performed. This is that which is called "real evidence" in any court. Only after the individual believer has been tried, and the evidence shows that he produced fruit (gold, silver, and precious stones), will he receive a reward (1Cor. 3:11-15). Only then may he experience the out-resurrection into a body like Christ's. For this first resurrection is given only to those who are deemed worthy.

Luke 20:35

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead [the first resurrection], neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

This worthiness is *not* the robe of righteousness that all receive upon being born again. It is the bridal gown of the "righteousnesses of the saints" that is awarded as a *prize* at the Judgment Seat.

Revelation 19:7-8

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness(es) of saints.

It was the ultimate hope of the apostle Paul to be a part of this out-resurrection. In Phil. 3:11 he wrote "...if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead". Here he expressed a desire to attain

this resurrection. Then he wrote in verse 12, "*...not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*"

Now, this is important! The resurrection that Paul is speaking of here is *not* the rapture. The rapture is the raising of the flesh and blood body of every believer who was purchased by the finished work of Christ on the Cross; this raising is in order to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is free and automatic to every believer (although each may experience it at different times, as we shall see later.) However, in Philippians Paul speaks of a different resurrection. One that has to be *worked* for, and not one given by *grace*, (on the basis of being born-again.) One that he did not know if he had yet attained. One that would raise him into the glory of Christ, but could not occur until he had been judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. In the Greek it is called the "exanastasis", which can be literally translated "out-resurrection". My personal paraphrase of this 11th verse is "*if by any means I might attain (by righteous works) unto the resurrection out from among those who have been raised from the dead*".

Lazarus was raised from the dead. But he was raised to life again in his mortal, flesh and blood body; and apparently, he later died again. There is a vast difference between being raised from the dead, and from attaining the out-resurrection from the dead into an immortal, flesh and bone glorified body such as Christ now possesses. The current popular doctrine that we are raptured into a glorified body is error. The "first resurrection" is clearly a reward; how could we be awarded such at the Judgment Seat if we already possessed it upon our appearance there?

The confusion comes from a misunderstanding of 1Cor. 15:

1 Corinthians 15:51-56

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

When does this occur? The passage tells us this is "at the last trump". Every born-again Christian is guaranteed a new, immortal body. Some receive it at His coming (the first resurrection); the rest receive it at the end of the 1,000 years:

Revelation 20:5

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Therefore, the "last trump" referred to above must be the last trump in time, at the end of the millennial rule. If it were at the beginning of the millennial rule, *then death could not be swallowed up in victory*, because there will still be death during the millennium.

Our text which says, "...Afterward, they that are Christ's at His coming", applies only to those who have been found worthy at the Judgment Seat of Christ. These alone receive their resurrection bodies at this time. Only "they that are Christ's" at His coming will qualify for this first resurrection. These are found

qualified as such at the Judgment Seat, because these are they who "have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts". They did this by obeying Christ, thus losing their lives here, that they may gain them there.

THE "FIRST RESURRECTION" – THOSE WHO WERE BEHEADED

Revelation 20:4-5

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Here the Apostle John was shown a vision of another group of people who will be part of the first out-resurrection. He uses the term "first resurrection", which is the same as the "second order". This is the resurrection that all believers are told to strive for.

In Rev. 6:9-11, at the opening of the fifth seal, we first saw some of this group of "souls" under the altar; and they were told to wait until their fellow-servants should also be killed. In the above verse, we see that they are finally given glorified bodies and thrones to rule upon. The question that could be asked here is: Where are those who lost their right to rule and reign in the kingdom? And the answer, of course, is that they are in outer darkness - Gehenna. This is confirmed in the very next verse (verse 5) of this text. Here our Lord says *"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection"*. This Scripture only speaks of the "rest" of the saved believers. The rest of the dead are those who lost their reward and were not a part of the first resurrection (that is, they were put to death again). Therefore, they will remain dead for a thousand years; at that point they will be finally given resurrection bodies.

Consider the following comments on the above verses in Revelation. Verse 4 says of the martyrs that they *lived* and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The term "lived" obviously means they were given resurrection bodies. Why, then, in the very next verse, should the term "lived not again" mean anything different from the preceding verse? The only difference is in the time when these were given their resurrection bodies - i.e. a thousand years later. This is the third order of resurrection discussed below.

THIRD ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION BODY

To begin this section, we need to go back to our text found in 1Cor. 15:23-24. There we saw the first two orders of the resurrection. These were (1) "Christ the firstfruits" and (2) "Afterward, they that are Christ's at His coming". Now, we come to the third order in verse 24, *"...Then (cometh) the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power"*.

This third order begins with word "then" (Gr. 'eita', meaning a particle of succession in time or logic). This word has two senses. It means either "at that time", or "afterwards". It is in the latter sense that it is being used here. If it were the other, where would be the millennium? No; there is at least one thousand years between the second order and the third order. But how are we to know that there is a third order? Because, the text demands it! You would be grammatically correct to say that the word "then" as used

here means "afterwards" (See Strong's 1534). The translators confused the issue by placing a "period" between vs. 23 and 24, because it is intended to be all one sentence that shows the different orders under discussion. Thus, after the second order (one thousand years after), there is another resurrection – at the end of the millennium. The word "cometh" was added by the translators, and is not in the original Greek.

When is the end? Our text says that it is when Jesus puts all enemies under His feet. This includes all power and authority in the universe as well as death itself (verse 26). This will be at the time just before the destruction of the earth by fire and the judgment of the lost. For at that time, Death and Hell will have been cast into the lake of fire. And there will be no more dying (1Cor. 15:26). Finally, Jesus will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and they will become all in all throughout the eternal ages, together with the saints of God.

During this progression of end-time events, it is not clear at what precise point this third order of resurrected saints will occur. I lean toward the time just at the close of the millennium and just before the raising of the lost to be judged. There are three reasons for this position. First, I do not believe that God would leave the bodies of these saints in the grave while He raises the lost and judges them. I believe the entire body of Christ will be witnesses to *that* great judgment. Secondly, their sentence in the Outer Darkness (Gehenna) will be over at the conclusion of Christ's kingdom on the earth. And I do not believe that God will allow them to stay there in confinement one second more than is required. Thirdly, this resurrection will have to happen before Christ destroys death itself, since His saints could not remain in the grave once this happens.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Second Death

Revelation 2:11

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

It should be obvious from the above verses that those who do *not* overcome, and thus do *not* have a part in the first resurrection, shall indeed be hurt by the second death.

The "much sorer punishment" than physical death (mentioned in Hebrews 10) is called the "second death" in the Book of Revelation. This second death for carnal believers is not the same as the second death for unbelievers who will perish for all eternity in the Lake of Fire. This "hurt" of the second death is only temporary, and it will last for 1,000 years, or the millennium.

Unbelievers will be thrown into the Lake of Fire after the Millennium. They will experience the "second death" throughout eternity. Yet, Christians are warned about the danger of being *temporarily* hurt by this fire at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Notice that the above warning in Rev. 2:11 is to the Churches. This means true Christians. If it does not, there would be no way ever to discern who is addressed in a given Bible passage. Various verses could be applied to true saints at each person's fancy or whim. John explains that by "Churches" the Holy Spirit means true Christians.

Revelation 1:4-6

John to the seven Churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 1:9

1 John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

John says he is the "brother" of the people in each of these seven congregations to whom the Book of Revelation is addressed. If there are false professors among them, they are not considered to be part of the Churches.

This is called the *second* death because it occurs *after* the raising of the body from the effects of the *first* death (Rev. 20:5). The conditional promise in Rev. 2:11, concerning this second death, certainly also contains a warning. If the Christian does not overcome, he will be hurt of the second death. It is like every other promise given in the same context to these seven Churches.

Revelation 2:26

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

No one doubts that the promise to Christians in the above verse is conditioned on overcoming. Those that do not overcome will not be given "power over the nations". The promise is at the same time a warning. Yet, some have maintained that the promise in Rev. 2:11 of not being hurt of the second death is only a figure of speech and that it need not mean that if one does not overcome that one will be hurt. I challenge anyone to show that any of the other similar promises to these seven Churches are not conditioned upon overcoming. They all are. These are warnings; in fact, the Spirit says to the Churches, "He that hath an ear let him hear." This can only mean that what is about to be given is conditioned upon the response of overcoming by the hearers. One would certainly need to have a high degree of evidence to interpret the language in any other manner. Their argument, "This is not a conditional promise in Rev. 2:11 because it is not a conditional promise" greatly begs the question when it is found in the context of six similar conditional promises.

Others that have been firmly rooted in the Biblical doctrine that a true Christian can never lose salvation rashly apply all the warnings about the "second death" to only unbelievers and false professors. This leaves the Christian (if he is consistent in his interpretation) with nothing to fear and nothing to hope for, since the warnings about the "second death" are in the same context as the warnings about losing crowns. Most will admit that the warnings about losing such crowns are addressed to real Christians; but they show much inconsistency when they interpret Christ's warnings about the second death as addressed to the lost. This is sloppy interpretation, and it immediately causes one to suspect ulterior motives; chiefly, the desire to escape that which would truly cause fear, leaving only warnings that would not frighten away carnal Church members. Most carnal Christians do not mind warnings to professors, for they assume they are not so unholy as to be considered such.

Notice again how the warnings about the "second death" are in the same context as other promises and warnings addressed to *real Christians*

Revelation 2:10-11

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Satan does not persecute lost, hypocritical professors in such a manner. And the lost are never told that they may win a crown for enduring ("*be thou faithful unto death*") to the end - they are not even true believers in Christ. The Spirit is speaking to the "Churches". The Christians in these Churches are told to

"overcome". If they do not overcome (i.e., get victory over the manifold temptations of Satan, the world, and their own sinful flesh), they will be "hurt of the second death."

To escape the warning, others run with the word "overcome" and wrest it from its context in the Book of Revelations. They claim that in John's first Epistle "overcome" means to simply be born again through faith (i.e., Salvation of the spirit).

1 John 5:4-5

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Christians also need to have practical faith in the authority and power of Jesus in order to overcome the world's temptations. Therefore, the phrase "born of God" in 1 John means more than simply initial salvation. It speaks of a daily, practical renewing that comes through yielding to the Spirit. "Overcometh" in 1 John 5 refers to a victorious walk that is only possible by daily faith in the Son God (See Hebrews 11, Romans 12:21).

Nevertheless, even if it is conceded that "overcometh" refers only to the initial born-again experience in 1 John, is this the way the word is being used in the context of Christ's words to the Seven Churches? Certainly, the context plainly reveals that Christ is addressing those already saved. He is exhorting them to "overcome" through works in the Christian life:

Revelation 2:2-3

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

Revelation 2:7

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:10-11

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Here the warning of the "second death" is right in the context of enduring prison and martyrdom for Christ's sake. Indeed, many early Christians were tempted to refrain from confessing Christ in public rather than endure the hardships of prison (or worse), which would often be the result of such confessions. It is a historical fact that such warnings and promises as these given in the Book of Revelations sustained many persecuted Christians in the first few centuries and gave them the extra motivation and grace to endure. Works such as "*The Martyr's Mirror*" (1660) thoroughly document the fact that thousands of saints under Pagan and Papal Rome gave up their physical lives to avoid having their souls slain by God after death (Rom. 8:13, Matt. 10:28).

Not a Loss of Eternal Salvation

Others argue that the conditional promise of not being hurt of the second death must refer to a possible loss of salvation in eternity. They point to the other verses in the Book of Revelation that reveal that the "second death" is the Lake of Fire. They show that unbelievers are thrown into this "lake" with no promise of deliverance"

Revelation 20:14-15

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Death and hell are indeed then cast into the "lake of fire". Yet all those who experience the fires of hell will not experience it to the *same degree*. The fire of God can be temporary for God's rebellious people, yet endless for God's rebellious enemies (i.e., non-Christians). The context will help determine the subjects who are being warned. Notice an example of this principle from the Old Testament:

Exodus 14:19-20

And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: 20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

The same pillar of the cloud was darkness to the Egyptians, but it gave light to the Israelites. What a contrast! Surely then it is no great thing if a fire of God is shown to be used as a rod of discipline for unrepentant Christians as well as a place of final, endless condemnation for the lost. But remember, we have already shown that the Outer Darkness, or Geheena, as an entirely separate place than the fires of Hell.

A Non-Overcoming Christian is raised from the dead in his flesh and blood body to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. If he is not judged to be worthy of the First Resurrection, this same flesh and blood body will experience a second death (die a second time), and he will be consigned to suffer for 1,000 years in the Outer Darkness, or Geheena. This living or dying (the second death) is clearly seen in Romans:

Romans 8:13

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

It is a mistake to assume that those who "shall die" in the above verse are the lost. The verse is addressed to "ye" – those Christians to whom the book of Romans is written – which includes all of us. And the term "ye shall die" does not refer to the first physical death that all the living experience. Because all die the first time (except those raptured alive), regardless of whether they "live after the flesh" or "after the Spirit". Therefore, the verse must not be referring to the first death, which we all experience, but to the "second death", which *may* be experienced at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Christians cannot lose eternal salvation. They will therefore only be hurt temporarily by this second death. They will be banished to the Outer Darkness throughout the millennium. After this, they will be raised to everlasting life at the Great White Throne on the Last Day:

1 Corinthians 3:15

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; YET SO AS BY FIRE.

Revelation 20:15

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Implicit in Rev. 20:15 above is that some *will* be found written in the book of life, and accordingly, will not be cast into the Lake of Fire, but will receive their glorified bodies and enter into life at that time.

The Outer Darkness was also referred to by Jesus as *Gehenna*, often mistranslated as *hell* in the Bible.

Matthew 5:29

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

In this much misunderstood, Jesus was addressing those with ears to hear - those Christians who are part of the church. The Sermon on the Mount, which contains this verse and many such similar verses, was addressed to those born-again; virtually, it can be considered a manual on how to enter the kingdom of heaven - a manual on how to attain Salvation of the Soul. Mark has similar such passages:

Mark 9:45-46

And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life [the 1,000 year kingdom], than having two feet to be cast into hell [Gehenna], into the fire that never shall be quenched: 46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

The non-overcoming Christian is not described as remaining here for all eternity; it is the fire that is never quenched. This is indeed a strong visual reminder of the fate of those who transgress against the Lord. As Paul so exquisitely stated:

2 Corinthians 5:11

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

SOME ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

There are two days of Scripture that contrast this present time with the time to come (the Judgment Seat of Christ). They are called "*The Day of Grace*", (*This Day*) (Eph. 3:2; Tit 2:12; 2Cor. 1:1); as opposed to "*The Day of Justice*" (*That Day*) (Matt. 10:15; 11:22-24; Jude 6; 2Peter 2:9). Consider the following:

- (1) whereas, This Day is the *day of salvation*, and the accepted time (2Cor. 6:2);
That Day is the *day of destruction* (1Thes. 5:2-3; 2Thes. 1:4-10; Luke 17:26-30)

- (2) whereas, This Day is the *day of ambassadors and reconciliation* (2Cor. 5:18-20),
That Day is the *day of visitation* (1Peter 2:12), and *the days of vengeance* (Luke 21:22).
- (3) whereas, This Day is *man's day* (1Cor. 4:3),
That Day is *the day of God* (2Peter 3:7-12), day of the Lord (1Thes. 5:2; 1Cor. 1:8; 5:5).
- (4) whereas, This Day there is the *throne of Grace* (Heb. 4:16),
That Day there will be the *throne of justice* (Psa 9:7; Rev. 4:5; 5:1-2; 15:7-8).
- (5) whereas, This Day is the *day of secrecy* on man's part,
That Day is the *day of discovery* on God's part (1Cor. 4:3-5; Luke 8:17; 12:2).
- (6) whereas, This Day is the *day of patience* on God's part (2Peter 3:15),
That Day is the *day of the manifestation* of God's justice (Rom. 2:5).

It is a settled matter for me that only those who pass the fiery tests of the Judgment Seat of Christ and who experience the out-resurrection in "That Day" will rule and reign with Christ for the Millennium. This is the first *resurrection* and the first *birth* of natural bodies into that of the spiritual bodies. Those who experience this *first resurrection* will become "*the firstborn sons of God*" or "*the Church of the Firstborn*" (Heb. 12:23). This will make them co-heirs with Christ throughout eternity. Their outshining will begin when they enter into the eternal ages.

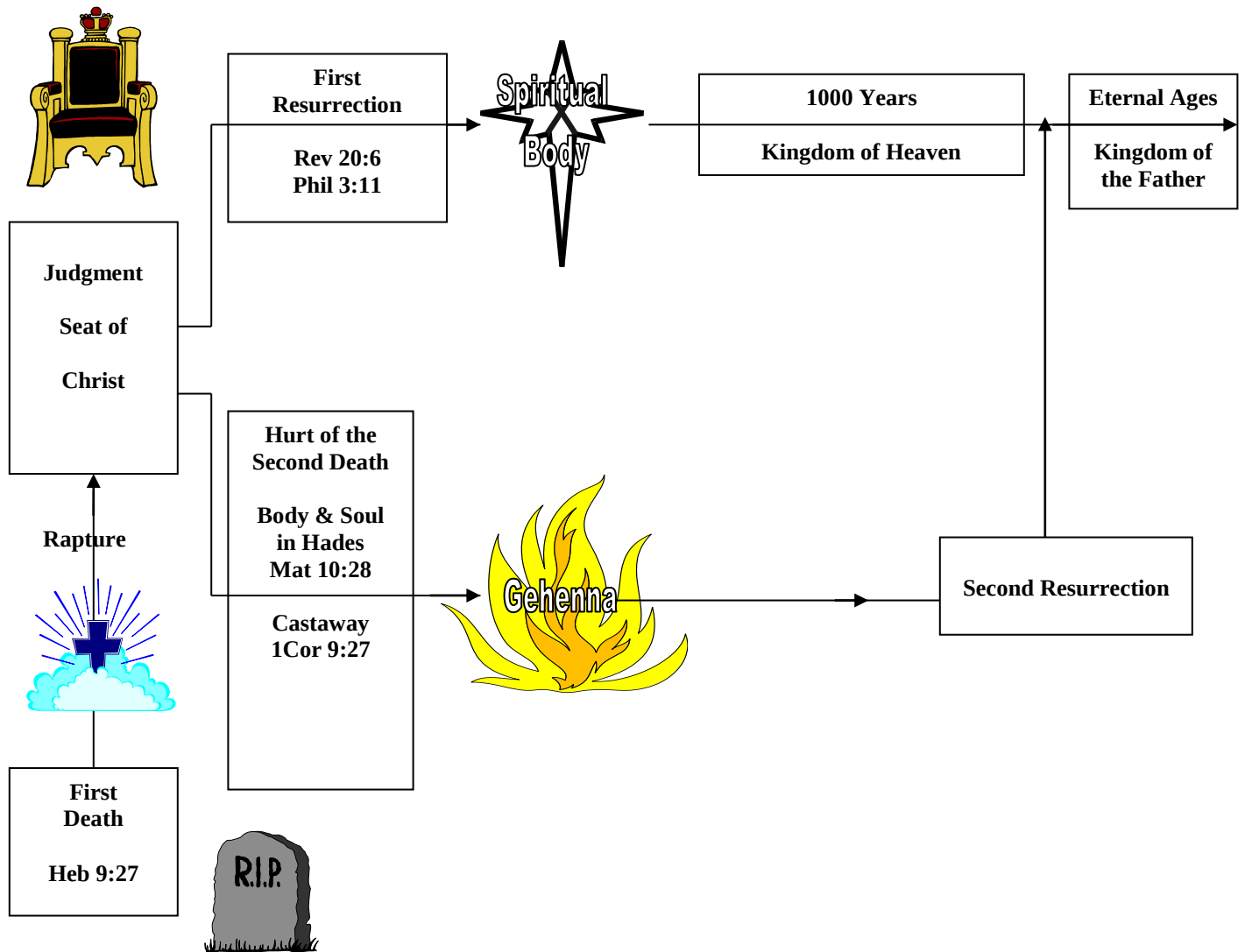
IN CONCLUSION

The question has been asked many times, "What will the body of the out-resurrection and end time resurrection be like?" The Scriptures tells us it will be raised a spiritual body (1Cor. 15:44). This does not mean that it is spirit, but rather a body animated and controlled by the Spirit. Consider this: Whereas, the present *natural* body is animated by blood, so the resurrection body will be animated by the Spirit. Whereas, this *present* body is controlled by the soul, so the future body will be controlled by the Spirit. Whereas, this present body has limitations and restraint, the future will be a body of glory perfectly serviceable with no limitations or restrictions throughout eternity and space.

As we examine the prototype, i.e. the resurrected body of Jesus Christ, we learn that our future body will be able to eat if so desired, but it will not be necessary (Luke 24:41-43). This body will have the ability to travel at the speed of thought and appear in rooms with locked doors (Luke 24:31, 36). It will be free from all sickness and death. In the eternal ages, it will be dazzling as suns (Mark 9:3; Phil. 3:21). It will be as the sun in its might (Matt. 13:43; 17:2). It will be as the brightness of the firmament (Dan 12:3). It will be higher than the angels (1Cor. 6:3). It will be as the body of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Phil. 3:21).

First and Second Resurrections

(Two Ways for a Christian to Spend 1,000 Years)



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Rapture

Few subjects are more controversial and hotly debated than this one. Every student of Scripture has his pet theory concerning this event, and few, if any, are ever persuaded otherwise. The different books written on the rapture, each with its own arguments and various conclusions, could no doubt fill the shelves of a small library; and new books come out on the subject in a never-ending succession. Rather than go into a very detailed study of all the pros and cons for each view, I will present my view and leave it up to the reader to decide if it has merit. The view presented herein fits each of the scenarios presented in the book of Revelation – this is a claim few others can make as they pitch their various views (most don't even bother with this step, or are even aware that it is possible.)

The rapture is a term used to describe the phase, wherever it is located eschatologically, of the second coming of Jesus Christ, Who, by the word of His power, will snatch, catch up, or rapture His true Church out of the gravitational pull of this planet to meet Him in the clouds. Some of you are probably aware that the term "rapture" does not appear in Scripture. It is a transliteration to English from the Latin word "rapere". The Greek word for this is "harpazo", which is translated in various places in the King James Bible as "caught up", "catch away", "pluck", and "take by force". There are several references to rapture in Scripture, but the following verses are the most specific and detailed:

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

I will use the terms "the Tribulation" to designate that entire period of seven years described as "Daniel's Seventieth Week" (a reference to the final "week of years" of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 that has yet to be fulfilled). The various scholarly views on rapture can be briefly described as:

Pre-Tribulation – The whole body of believers will be raptured before the beginning of the seven weeks, when the Antichrist makes a seven-year peace treaty guaranteeing Israel's safety.

Mid-Tribulation – The whole body of believers will be raptured at mid-point, or 3^{1/2} years into the Tribulation, when the Antichrist breaks the peace treaty with Israel, and sets himself in the temple to be worshipped as god.

Split-Rapture – A part of the saved will be raptured before the tribulation, and a part of them will be raptured at mid-tribulation.

Pre-Wrath - The whole body of believers will be raptured before God pours out His final wrath.

Post-Tribulation – The whole body of believers will be raptured at the end of the seven year period of the Tribulation period, and thus Christians must go through it all.

No Rapture – Self explanatory.

Well-known believers are found in all seven schools of thought. Just because any one of them is different from the one you hold does not give you the warrant to denounce the different view. Because they all have valid points, none of the five schools can completely ignore the others. Yet only one is correct, right?

What if certain of the above positions on the rapture are partly true, but they are not necessarily totally exclusive to the other views?

I will present a less familiar view, and you may decide if it has validity. Please be patient until I have reached the end of my discussion. I remind you of Proverb 18:13 - *He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*

A DIFFERENT VIEW OF THE RAPTURE

As I stated, rather than list all the reasons for the various viewpoints and then possibly refute them, I prefer to present a premise, and give scriptural support as we proceed. Hopefully, this method will be more efficient and straight to the point. What, then, does the Bible actually teach? I believe Scripture teaches a split-rapture; however, I see several raptures - not just two - throughout the book of Revelation.

First, I would ask you to consider the possibility of the Pre-Tribulation rapture promised in the following two verses:.

(1)

Revelation 3:10

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

"The hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world" – This "hour" is the *entire* seven-year tribulation period. This verse tells us that a certain class of people may escape it altogether - those who keep the word of the patience of Christ (those who obey Him). Here we see that this pre-trib rapture is not based solely on being born again as children of God, but is dependent on one other condition, which is, "keeping the word of His patience". However you may interpret this act, you must admit that it is a work; no where in Scripture does it say, "Keep the word of my patience, and thou shalt be saved". We are saved by grace, not by works. Do all believers today keep the word of the patience of Christ? Obviously not, or it would not have been presented as a condition necessary to the fulfillment of the promise.

Immediately, however, the mid-tribulators would say that this passage of Scripture does not refer to pre-trib rapture, but it says that God will "keep" them safely through the Tribulation. (For example, when the land of Egypt came under the plagues, the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt, went unscathed (Exo 9:26; 10:23). Such a posture is erroneous, however, because the "keeping" in view here is not a keeping *through* but a keeping *from*. This is so, because in the Greek text, after the word "keep" in this verse there is the word "ek", which means "out of" (as in the word *ekklesia* which means "the called out ones". Here, therefore, *ek* signifies a being kept out of the Tribulation.

The trial which is to come upon the whole world is the entire Tribulation period. But notice that is not a keeping from the *temptation*, or trial, but it is a keeping from the *hour* of the trial. In order to be kept out of the hour of trial, we must *leave the world*. There are only two ways for God to keep us out – death or rapture. The logical conclusion is that, as the above verse clearly states, at least some part of the saints alive on earth will be raptured before the tribulation period begins.

(2)

Luke 21:36

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

This verse demonstrates that *somebody* is going to escape. And, according to this verse, it will not be the *entire* Church (of those alive at the time). Here a *condition* for escaping the entire tribulation period is presented – which is to "watch and pray" (*a work*) that you may be accounted worthy. The verse is obviously directed towards born again believers. If all were to escape because of our worthiness due to Christ's robe of righteousness that we all receive upon justification, then the verse would be redundant and even senseless. Why warn Christians of that which can never happen?

How are believers to escape all these coming things and to stand before the Son of Man? Obviously, it is by being raptured. Death is not usually a blessing; we do not normally pray for death. The condition for rapture here is to "watch and pray". Therefore, only those of the saved who watch and pray will be raptured at this point. "Pray always" – what do we pray for? Pray that we may escape all these things which shall come to pass. "That ye may be accounted worthy" – This is not a question of grace, but rather a matter of worthiness. *This* escape is *conditional*, and God will not receive you to a place where you have no desire to go. That some people may consider heaven as an "undesirable" place to be at that moment (e.g. – I have things to do here yet) is indicated by these words: "*lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life (Luke 21:34)*". If a balloon is tethered, it will not ascend.

Others may contend that rapture is not dependent on conduct – yet in reply, I would ask do you really think a carnal believer lying on a bed of fornication will go in this first rapture? Or perhaps some may think that "*all these things*" does not refer to the Tribulation but to the "*surfeiting, drunkenness, and cares of this life*" cited in verse 34. In reply, please note that verse 36 reads, "*all these things that shall come to pass*" – whereas "*surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life*" pertain to the things which are presently occurring *now*. "The things that shall come to pass" is yet future and is a description of events in the Tribulation period listed in the previous verses Luke 21:10-33. And therefore, "*watch ye*" means to not be deceived by such activities – to not let these activities make your eyes heavy with sleep that you no longer watch.

Questions Raised against Separate Raptures

(1) Some people say that the rapture of the Church cannot be divided because the body of Christ cannot be divided. I would reply, however, that the body is a figure of speech that signifies one life. If the body is taken literally, then there is already division today, because the Lord is now in heaven, Paul has already died, we remain living on earth, and some believers are yet to be born.

But the Bride of Christ *will* be taken *out* of the body, just as Eve was taken out of Adam's body. But only the portion of the Bride of Christ (consisting of saints alive at that time) will be taken at the First-Fruits Rapture (refer to the previous discussion of the Parable of the Ten Virgins) as we find in the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. This parable gives the order of when believers will be judged:

Matthew 20:8

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire [rewards], beginning from the last unto the first.

(2) Others object that rapture is part of redemption, and that since redemption is according to grace, rapture cannot be based on the concept of worthiness. In reply, please reconsider the aforementioned Luke 21:36 where it clearly states *worthiness*. However, if my premise that there is more than one rapture shown in Scripture is correct, then it *is* true that *all* Christians will be raptured; and it becomes a matter of *which* rapture the Christian will be part of.

(3) Some observers ask, is it not rather cruel to take away hope from the Church? To which I must answer that in the Scriptures there is no such false hope given; and therefore it is better to alert people to this fact. The warnings are clearly there because the Lord's will is that no one would be left behind.

The *true* hope the Christian can have is that if he will, at this moment, repent of his unholy ways, and truly follow the Lord, he will have part in the coming kingdom. This can be seen in the Parable of the Laborers. This parable clearly taught that those who had been working in the vineyard for only one hour, as opposed to those who had been working all day, received the same reward (life for the age). See Chapter twenty-seven for more discussion on this theme. This is a real hope; but it is conditional.

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

(4) 1Cor. 15:23, say some, only mentions "they that are Christ's at his coming" and that nothing is said about works. But please note the definition of "they that are Christ's":

Galatians 5:24

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Not all Christians have "crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts". This is a work of sanctification carried about by the Holy Spirit, but it requires our cooperation.

And please take note that in an earlier chapter in the same epistle (1Cor. 6:9) it clearly states that those who do such unrighteous things "*shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*", and this same warning is repeated in Gal. 5:21. Therefore, those who are guilty of such a lifestyle have already been excluded, and they are not under consideration as "they that are Christ's" *at His coming*. The inheritance, as has already been discussed at length in an earlier chapter, is a *family* matter; the unsaved never enter the picture in this regard.

(5) There is a distinction made in the Bible between wheat and tares, some say, but no difference between wheat and wheat; consequently, all wheat must be raptured. In reply, please take note that the times of ripening for wheat are not the same. Thus, there are the firstfruits, the general harvest, and then

the gleanings harvest. Moreover, there is a great distinction made between wheat and chaff. Only the wheat is gathered into His garner. But this happens at the Judgment Seat, not at the rapture. The Rapture brings us to the Judgment Seat.

Concerning the Second Coming

Concerning the second coming ("what shall be the sign of thy coming?"), we need to distinguish three Greek words: (1) *parousia*, (2) *apokalupsis*, and (3) *epiphaneia*. The term used by the disciples in asking the Lord about His "coming" is the Greek word *parousia* which should be translated "presence"; this word is used in the Scriptures 22 times. *Apokalupsis* means "uncovering" or "revelation". The term *epiphaneia* means "appearing".

The word "coming" in Matt. 24:3 is *parousia* ("presence"). Why does the Holy Spirit choose to use this particular term? Possibly because this matter of our Lord's coming is a rather complicated event and the Greek term *parousia* carries within its meaning a very broad scope.

The "*parousia*" of the Lord commences with the first rapture to the throne.

James 5:7-8

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Then 1 Thessalonians mentions:

- (1) of a standing before the Lord Jesus Christ at His *parousia* (2:19);
- (2) of the time of the *parousia* of the Lord with all His saints (3:13);
- (3) of how we shall all be caught up and meet the Lord in the air at His *parousia* (4:15-17); and
- (4) of having our spirit and soul and body preserved entire without blame unto the *parousia* of our Lord (5:23).

Thus, my point is that the "coming of the Lord" is a complicated term that encompasses several events that do not happen in the same instant of time, but over a period of years at the endtimes.

All who are Christ's shall be resurrected (1Cor. 15:23);

All the believers will gather together with Him (2Thes. 2:1).

In His *parousia*, He will deal with the Antichrist (2Thes. 2:8).

The lawless one will also have his own *parousia* (2Thes. 2:9).

If we abide in Christ we may have boldness and not be ashamed before Him at His *parousia* (1John 2:28).

Therefore, we can conclude from these Scripture passages that *parousia* includes both the throne of Christ on earth and His appearing "in the air". Time-wise, it begins with the first rapture and ends with the appearing of Christ and His saints on earth to establish His throne. Thus, *parousia* actually encompasses the period between the Church age and the establishment of His kingdom. It comprises (1) the first rapture to the throne, (2) The seven-year Great Tribulation period, and (3) the appearing of Christ with His saints on earth. However, it should be noted that in the foregoing discussion we have accounted for only one of the several apparent raptures shown in the book of Revelation. The remaining raptures will be covered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Things That Will Be Hereafter

In the previous chapter, I hope I have at least demonstrated the *possibility* that there is a pretribulation rapture. Now I would like to show you the various raptures that I find in the Book of Revelation, and in particular, why only one of these several raptures can be the one described in 1Thes. 4. In Chapter 22 we saw the three orders of the resurrection, and that they were typified by the laws of harvest found in Leviticus. We saw that Jesus was the *firstfruits* of this harvest. Those who will be given glorified bodies in the first resurrection during the extended period of His second coming are typified as the *general harvest*; and those who are given their glorified bodies at the end of the millennium [the second (last) resurrection] are typified as the *gleanings*. We saw these three orders in 1Cor. 15:22-26. I call these orders the *Resurrection Harvest*.

The Rapture Likened to the Wheat Harvest

The order of the rapture is likewise established by the laws of harvest. There will be a firstfruits, a general, and a gleanings rapture, and the basis of determining these various raptures is the *ripeness* of the Christians involved. That Christians are compared to wheat by our Lord is established in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:25).

Matthew 13:25

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

Wheat ripens toward the sun; and the basis of determining when it is ripe is whether there is any moisture remaining. Thus we can see the analogy to Christians: the moisture represents the things of this world that we brothers and sisters so dearly cling to; this keeps us from maturing (Salvation of the Soul). Therefore, our loving Heavenly Father sends trials and tribulations that are designed to "dry us out", so we may ripen.

James 1:2-4

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

We see a similar comparison of God's method of "ripening" us in John 15 (although in this instance Christians are likened to purging branches in a vine):

John 15:2

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Here, the "purging" can be likened to the "drying out" of the wheat. In both cases, God uses trials and tribulations to ripen the wheat or to bring forth more fruit from the vine. The sun represents the trials God sends. No Christian is exempt from God's trials, for "*whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth*

every son whom he receiveth (Heb. 12:6). When the Christian is first born-again, he is considered a child, and he is nourished with "milk" doctrines. Soon, however, God expects us to grow, and He often must send trials to wean us from the milk, and bring us along to maturity. God says *"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him"*. Unfortunately (from the standpoint of our own earthly wisdom), we often view this correction as misery that surely comes from the devil. But James tells us to count it all joy, because God's goal is to perfect us (Salvation of the Soul) that we may enter the Kingdom of Heaven. From God's viewpoint, such trials are a blessing, because they cause us to bear much fruit.

It is interesting to note a fact about wheat: as wheat is ready to ripen, the weight of the moisture bends it toward the earth; but the sun soon dries it out, and causes it to "reach up" to the heavens.

Ripeness

The vital principle of all harvesting has been laid down by our Lord once for all:

Mark 4:29

But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

A farmer does not reap his field because a fixed date has come, but because his wheat is ripe; the reaping of unripe wheat is utterly unknown; and the farmer cuts only those sections of his field which *are* ripe. So it is in the spiritual sphere: study nature, and learn grace; for they are both from the hand of one Maker. Wheat, our Lord reveals, is the Church (for He defines the wheat-plants as the children of the Kingdom, growing, without intermission, between the first sowing by the Son of Man and the End of the Age). "Wheat" is a type of *Christian*, not Jewish, experience.

Matthew 13:38-39

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; 39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

Thus, considering the above two verses together, our Lord unfolds a momentous principle. It is not just *wheat* that the Angels reap, but *ripe* wheat - neither the individual believer, nor the Church as a whole, is ripe simply because they are wheat (our Lord's words indicate a delay between the springing of the wheat and its maturity); *and it is not Christ's return that rules the ripeness of the wheat, but the ripeness of the wheat that determines the time of the harvest.*

Our Lord, from the viewpoint of the Book of Revelation and of His Advent, divides the Church throughout this dispensation ("*the things which are*" – Rev. 1:19) into seven divisions: the seven churches from Ephesus through Laodicea. In a like manner, "*the things that will be hereafter*" reveals several categories extending over the period of the Parousia. These are provably distinct resurrections or translations, or special recognition. Without elaboration, I will list these seven categories described in Revelation, and then defend my position afterwards.

- 1). Rev. 4:1 Pre-Trib rapture of the 24 elders (the "ones taken" in Matt. 24:40)
- 2). Rev. 6:9 5th Seal - special recognition given to the martyrs of all ages - not a rapture.
- 3). Rev. 7:9 6th Seal - great multitude no man could number
- 4). Rev. 11:12 Mid-Trib (a) - the two witnesses - lead the way for those to follow in 5
- 5). All these are describing the same event or happen at the same time:
 Mid-Trib (b)
 Rev. 11:18a dead Non-Overcomers
 Rev. 11:18b dead Overcomers
 Rev. 12:5 the Man Child
 1Th. 4:16-17 dead in Christ and we who are alive and remain
 Rev. 14:1 the 144,000
- 6). Rev. 15:2-4 Pre-Wrath rapture of those alive of the "Church of the After-Born"
- 7). Rev 20:4 Post-Trib rapture of those martyrs killed for their testimony

Because it is outside the scope of this book, I have no intention of presenting a complete exegesis of the Book of Revelation in this writing. Rather, I will present certain truths that are displayed therein that apply to the subject of this writing – the Salvation of the Soul. I will point out each of the raptures described in Revelation, and will offer proof of their relation to pertinent Scriptures elsewhere in the Bible (especially 1Thes. 4:14-17). I will also discuss the overcomers who are described in Rev. 2-3, and the fulfillment of certain of the promises our Lord made to them in these chapters.

1 - The Firstfruits Harvest Rapture

The firstfruits rapture is the pre-tribulation rapture of "they that were ready" (Matt. 25:10); these are the five wise virgins, the "chosen" that we already discussed in a previous chapter. These are the ones that "shall be taken" in the first rapture described by Jesus in Matt. 24:40-42.

Matthew 24:40

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Those raptured can be seen in the Book of Revelation as the twenty-four elders. Hold on; I know this statement is highly controversial - please hear me out.

Revelation 4:4

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

Revelation 5:8-10

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the

prayers of saints. 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Who are these mysterious elders? Before we can ascertain their identity, we must back up a few verses. (I heartily invite you to follow along with me in your Bible.)

In verse 4:1, we see that John was called up to heaven.

Revelation 4:1

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

This open door in heaven, and this calling up of the Apostle John through that door into heaven, indicate to us the manner in which Christ intends to fulfill His promise to keep certain of His saints "out of the hour of temptation" (Rev. 3:10), and by what means it is that those who "watch and pray always" shall "escape" (Luke 21:36) the dreadful sorrows with which this present world will be visited in its last years.

Whether the voice all Christians shall hear in that day will say, "*come up hither*", or whether that voice will say, "*Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him*", is only conjecture at this point. But the fact is, all the living redeemed will hear this voice at this time (*and at midnight, there was a cry made* - Matt. 25:6). To some, who will be taken, it will be a sound of infinite joy, as they contemplate what is about to happen in the next few moments. To others, who will be left, this sound will cause frantic scrambling and confusion – the scrambling, as they first become aware that they are not ready ("*and the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out*" - Matt. 25:8) - confusion and vacillation, as they look back at the goods in the house they are reluctant to leave: "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*". (Matt. 6:21)

Luke 17:31-32

In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife.

Those left behind will become (in type) as did Lot's wife: pillars of salt in a saltless earth which, after this rapture, will then be bereft of all matured Christians ("they that are ready"). They have looked back after they have put their hands to the plough, they have looked back to "*his stuff in the house*", and are accordingly not considered *worthy (fit)* of Him who called.

Luke 9:62

And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Oh, the tears and recriminations; but, alas, it is too late now. They must regroup and face the coming trials that shall come upon all the earth; but there is still hope. These trials will cause them to ripen, in order that they may be ready when He calls again - although this next call will not be for the Bride. That particular blessing has been lost forever - "*and the door was shut*" (Matt. 25:10). The Bride will be taken

out of the body of Christ; these are representative of the portion of the Bride who are *alive* at that time. (The portion of the Bride who are *not* alive at that time will be raptured later.)

To those who go forth at His call, there will be a change and transfer as sudden and miraculous as in the case of the Apostle John when he was "snatched up" (Rev. 4:1-2). And as the seven letters to the Churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 show us, the overcomers - these faithful ones in their sufferings, conflicts, virtues, and victories on earth - chapter 4 shows us the consideration of their final positions and rewards in heaven.

The scene of this vision is in heaven. The door that John saw was an opening "in the heaven". The voice that he heard came from above. It commanded him to "come up hither". And it was potent, for "immediately" he "became in the spirit". It worked an instantaneous rapture, so that the next opening of his eyes disclosed his presence in a supernatural region. So will it be in a similar manner at the first rapture.

Notice also that this vision sets forth "*the things which shall be hereafter*" - after the fulfillment of the vision and letters given to John concerning the Churches. The links of consecutiveness are distinctly expressed, and are by no means to be overlooked. The declared object for which the apostle was called up was to be shown not what existed in heaven at the time - as some have mistakenly thought - but "*the things which must take place hereAFTER*". The seven Churches, in all the types of their representative significance, were first to run their course, and the order of things to which they belonged was to touch upon its end, before one jot of what is here portrayed was to be realized.

The vision in Revelation Chapters 2-3, as I have been led to conclude, and as I think must be admitted, embraces the whole continuity of the dispensation under which we are now living, and takes in the entire earthly Church-state - from the time of the apostles to the end of the age, which is at Christ's coming again to receive His people to Himself. That end I regard as to be very near, but so long as it is yet future, the time to which this vision refers is also in the future. It relates to things which do not exist as yet, and which cannot become reality until that to which they are specifically said to be *subsequent to* is fulfilled. It is therefore a picture of things in the sky, immediately upon the first movement of the Savior in His coming (parousia) to judgment, marked by the miraculous seizing away of certain saints from their brothers and sisters on earth to the clouds of heavenlies (not to be confused with the third heaven, or Paradise.) It is in the heavenlies ("*in the air*") where they will face the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ, which will for this particular group issue only in blessing and rewards.

It should also be observed that the things foreshown in this vision, while they come after the first supernatural interference with the present order by God, they still *precede* the Great Tribulation and the scenes of judgmental visitation upon the apostate Church and the guilty world. Please note that what John sees is permanent. It continues through all that comes after, the same as seen at the first. The throne, the elders, the living ones, retain their places unchanged, and have direct connection with all that subsequently transpires. The action of the seals, which brings the Great Tribulation upon the world, and the still more remote action of the trumpets and vials, and the whole picture of judgments described in later chapters of this book, proceed from, and depend more or less on, the scene of glory and power represented in these chapters 4 and 5. The realization of what they describe must, therefore, fall intermediately between the first removal of saints from earth, and the forthcoming of the great troubles, leading to the destruction of Babylon and the Antichrist.

This vision, then, obviously refers to a new order of things, which first comes into being at the time to which the vision refers. The apostle's language implies that the act of the placing of the throne where he saw it was only being completed at the moment of his looking. That moment was the moment of his being called up from earth into heaven. This particular rapture of the saints, then, is the point of transition, where the present dispensation begins to end, and another, of which this throne is the center, takes its commencement. The passage is an exact parallel, both as to subject and phraseology, to Dan. 7:9, where the prophet says: "*I beheld until the thrones were set, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose throne was like the fiery flame*". The vision embraced the *placing* of the throne, as well as the throne itself and the locality it occupied.

"And out of the throne proceed lightnings, and thunderings and voices". These phenomena demonstrate that the throne is one of judgment, and that wrath is about to proceed from it. When God was about to visit Egypt's sins upon her, He "sent thunder (in Hebrew, 'voices'), and hail, and fire ran along the ground" (Exo. 9:23). When He wished to show Israel the terribleness of His anger with sin, "*there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud*" (Exo. 19:16).

These instances, and similar others in the Old Testament, show us that this is *not* a throne of grace, but a throne of judgment. And these lightnings, thunders, and voices proceeding from it tell of justice and wrath to be visited upon transgressors. The river of water of life is gone, and in its place is the terror and fire of judgment and death. The throne speaks vengeance upon the guilty, and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of the throne, the Spirit of devouring fire.

Revelation 4:4

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

There was more than one throne. In the center, conspicuous, and majestic beyond description, was the throne of Deity; but in a wide circle around it were twenty-four other thrones, distinct and glorious, but smaller and lower than what is, by eminence, called "*the Throne*". Our translators call them "seats", but it is the same word used in verse 4:2 of God's throne. They are all thrones, certainly, but a particular kind of thrones – regal, seats of majesty and dominion, seats of royalty in the presence of the enthroned One. Nor can we be at loss as to the persons who occupy them. They are not angels, but human beings. This is ascertained by the song they sing, in which they speak of having been gathered out of the tribes and peoples of the earth:

Revelation 5:9

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

These are from "every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation". They are not unfallen beings, but ransomed sinners, for they give honor to Christ for redeeming them – "(Thou) hast redeemed US to God by thy blood". THIS IS A VERY CRITICAL POINT, which some continue to furiously debate, even having gone so far as to change the correct translation in the King James Version.

Other popular translations, for example the NIV, make the same verse say:

"And with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on earth." (NIV)

Obviously, the NIV (and the NAS likewise) change the identity of this group simply by changing it from the 1st person to the 3rd person. To the translators of these and others "versions" of the Bible I would say, **YOU HAVE PERVERTED THE WORD OF THE LIVING GOD!** God, knowing this would occur, called a special curse on those who would add or subtract from His word:

Revelation 22:18-19

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

I am not the judge of this matter. I have no idea of their motives, and perhaps their translations can be justified academically from man's viewpoint. I will not try to argue this point, because there is no absolute proof from the Greek as to who is right.

I would simply point out the fact of the similarity of the language of the verses in the previous chapter 1:

Revelation 1:5-6

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

It is obvious from the language of the above verse that John is referring to redeemed human men and women who lived on earth. No one contests these verses. Why would the language, which is identical in substance, suddenly change from "us" in chapter 1 to "them" in chapter 5? Both translations are correct grammatically; both can be justified grammatically (at least from their versions of the Greek originals). Then why were they changed? In my opinion, it appears a deliberate attempt was made to change the Bible to suit the translators' doctrine as to the identity of these twenty-four elders.

These critics and expositors rejected the Greek word "heemas" (which means "us") in this passage for the sole reason that it is omitted in the Codex Alexandrinus. The Codex Sinaiticus, however, which was discovered in 1860, and which is of equal antiquity and authority with the Codex Alexandrinus, contains this word. The Latin, Coptic or Memphitic, and Armenian, which are of great value, contain this word. And so do all other manuscripts and versions. *And to discredit it simply and only because it does not appear in that one single Codex of Alexandria (which they often term the "oldest and best manuscripts") is most unreasonable and unjust to the weight of authority for its retention.* Also, the evidence from the context argues powerfully for a construction which necessarily embraces it, whether expressed or not.

I consider the King James Version indubitably inspired. This is the Bible of the great Protestant revival, and no other version can even approach the majesty and beauty and heavenly inspiration of it. I hold the King James Version to be the final authority in matters of difference.

And I certainly mistrust any translation to which a secular corporation (NIV, NAS, etc.) owns the copyright. Furthermore, when I see in a footnote to any Bible the term "the oldest and best manuscripts", I am immediately suspicious of what is about to follow; and I cannot but help to wonder if the author of that footnote is guilty of intellectual pride. For the fact of the matter is, in the question under consideration of "us" or "they", the "us" is indeed found in twenty-three of the twenty-four *only* manuscripts which contain this verse in the book of Revelation. I think the weight of this argument is incontrovertible.

I won't enter into a lengthy diatribe against the new popular versions such as the NIV and the NAS, and others; this is not germane to the subject of this book, Salvation of the Soul.

Jesus said not one jot or tittle of His word would fail till all be fulfilled. I would have to think that many perverted versions of the Bible on the market and in the hands of Christians today go much farther than "one jot or tittle". But it is all part of the "leaven" that a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Jeremiah 23:36

... for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God.

Therefore, for the foregoing reasons, I maintain that the King James Version is correct in its translation of the critical word in point as "us", and not "they". The twenty-four elders are singing a song about themselves - the redeemed, and the kings and priests referred to in the song are none other than themselves.

These elders are not disembodied spirits of the saints, but glorified subjects of grace, for they are enthroned, crowned, and robed in white, which is a fruition of blessedness and honor which is everywhere reserved until *after* the rapture and resurrection. Paul tells us that he was to receive his "crown of righteousness", not at his decease, but "at that day" – the day of Christ's coming to awake and gather His saints – and that the same is true of "all" who are to be partakers of that crown (2Tim. 4:8). The entire scriptural doctrine concerning the state of the dead forbids the idea that disembodied souls are already crowned and enthroned, although they are presently at rest in the Bosom of Abraham (in Hades). (I have covered this in great detail in a previous chapter.) Such rewards Christ is to bring with Him (Rev. 22:12; 11:18; Isa 52:11); hence, no one receives them until He comes, recalls the sleepers, and completes that redemption of power for which all things wait (Rom. 8:22-23).

The coronation time is the resurrection time: and no one can be crowned until he is either raised (if dead), or translated (if living). Any other doctrine overthrows some of the plainest teachings of Scripture, and carries confusion into the whole Christian system.

As John beholds certain subjects of redemption - robed, and crowned, and enthroned - as priests and kings in heaven, we here have positive demonstration that, at the time to which this vision relates, a resurrection or translation, and then glorification, have already taken place. It will not do to say that the picture anticipates the position and triumphs of the Church after the seals, trumpets, and vials have run their course. They occupy these thrones, while the closed book, which brings forth the seals and trumpets, lies untouched in the hand of Him that sits upon the Throne. They see it there, and they unanimously vote the Lamb worthy to open it. They behold Him taking it up, and fall down and worship as He holds it. They are in their places when heaven receives the accession of the multitude which comes "out of the Great Tribulation" (Rev. 7:11-14). They still have their own distinct positions when the still later company of

the 144,000 gathers around the Lamb on Mount Zion. And they are spectators of the judgment of great Babylon, and sing Alleluia in glory as they see her fall (Rev. 19:4). Instead of anticipation of the final result of the great day of the Lord, there is actual participation in the processes and administrations by which that result is carried out.

Thus, they cannot be, as some maintain, angelic beings who are at this moment "casting their crowns before the throne" in a submissive resignation of their former places of authority in recognition of the new order of rule which is about to come, i.e. the rule of redeemed men under Christ (Rev. 4:10).

These are the children of the resurrection. They are the first-born from the dead – the first glorified of all the company of the redeemed – the seniors of the celestial assembly; not indeed with respect to the number of their years on earth, but with respect to the time of their admission into heaven. They have received their resurrection bodies in advance of the judgment-tribulations, are crowned and officiating as kings and priests in glory, while others, less faithful, are still slumbering in their graves, or suffering on the earth. They do not represent, by any means, the whole body of the redeemed, as some have supposed, but are exactly what their name imports – the *seniors* of them, both in rank, and in time of being placed in office. They are the first-born of the household – the oldest of the family – and hence, the honored officials.

There certainly is, as we shall more fully see hereafter, a succession in the order in which the saints are gathered into their final glory. There are these who "escape" the Tribulation, being taken to heaven before it comes; there are others who suffer through it, and are only taken to heaven out of it, at a later rapture. Then, there is a special company of sealed ones, who come in at a still later period; and a "harvest of the earth", still subsequent to their appearance with the Lamb on Mount Zion.

And of these successive companies and orders, the enthroned ones of this vision are among the first, if not absolutely the first. They are the seniors – the elders. John saw only 24 of them, but these were the representatives of many others. There were many priests and Levites under the old economy. The number of those who *"were set to forward the work of the house of the Lord, was twenty and four thousand"* (1Chr. 23:3-4). But they were all arranged in courses of twenty-four (1Chr. 24:2-5), so that never more than 24 were found on duty at a time. There were also many prophets appointed to praise God with instruments of song; but they too were arranged in 24 courses, each course with its own individual representative (1Chr. 25). These were not human devices, but things specifically directed by the Spirit of the Lord (1Chr. 18:11-13; 18:19), and meant to be "figures of the true", and "patterns of things in the heavens" (Heb. 9:9, 23-24). Accordingly, we are to see in these 24 royal priests but one course of as many more shifts, all of which together represent thousands upon thousands of the same high and privileged class.

I find, then, in these enthroned elders, the highest manifested glory of the risen and glorified saints. They are in heaven. They are around the throne of Deity. They are pure and holy, wearing white, "which is the righteousness of the saints". They are partakers of celestial dominion. They are kings of glory, with golden crowns. They are settled, and at home in their exalted positions - not standing and waiting as servants - but seated as royal counselors of the Almighty. They are assessors of the great Judge of the quick and dead, the spectators of all that transpires in heaven and earth, and participants in the judgment of the world for its sins, the Church for its apostasies, Babylon for her impurities, the Antichrist for his blasphemies, and that old serpent and his brood, for their ungodliness and wickedness during all these long 6,000 years.

1 Corinthians 6:2-3

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

But some would say, "To carry prayers to God as is shown in verse 5:8 is not the action of the Church". This may have merit on earth, but these elders are no longer on earth. They have been made kings and priests after the order of Melchizedek, and they are in heaven. If Jesus is our High Priest, and part of His functions as such includes intercessory prayer on behalf of the saints on earth, why is it unreasonable that these elder priests could now bring prayers before God?

Thus, we have the identity of these twenty-four elders. And when John saw them, they had already been raptured, given glorified bodies, rewarded with crowns, and are seated in heavenly places upon John's arrival. They were taken, as those pictured by the five wise virgins, in a secret rapture, which is pre-tribulational.

I call this the **Firstfruits Harvest Rapture**. It occurs at some point prior to the time the Antichrist signs (or enforces) the seven-year peace treaty with Israel.

These twenty-four elders represent the "Faithful and Wise Servant" and the "Five Wise Virgins". As such, these are the Bride of Christ. No other group (of those living at the time) can attain this station, for the "door was shut" (Matt. 25:10). Of the "Faithful and Wise Servants", Jesus said, *"I will make him ruler over all my goods"* (Matt. 24:47); this reward is described further in Luke as "ruler over all that he hath" (Luke 12:44). Thus these are given the highest rewards in all of heaven. This is why we see their thrones in heaven – none of the other groups are seen to have thrones in the successive heavenly scenes, because their thrones will be manifested at a later time in the Kingdom of Heaven that rules over the earth.

One final note, which is very important: the rapture described here ("one shall be taken, one shall be left") is a rapture of those saints who are *alive* at the time of the rapture. It does not include any of the "dead in Christ" who are raptured at a later time. The reason for this is established in the Parable of the Laborers.

The Parable of the Laborers

Matthew 20:1-16

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. 9 And when they

came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. 11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the Goodman of the house, 12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. 13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? 14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

This parable concerns the Church only (*"the kingdom of heaven is likened unto"*). It covers the entire Church age - from its beginning - *"early in the morning"* (vs. 1) – to its end – *"when even was come"* (vs. 8). Beginning in verse 8, it depicts the various raptures (*"Call the laborers"*) and the rewards given at the Judgment Seat of Christ (*"give them their hire"*).

A major point of the parable is that the order of appearing before the Judgment Seat is from the last to the first (*"beginning from the last to the first"*), and this is even repeated as the conclusion (*"So the last shall be first, and the first last"* – vs. 16). Therefore, it is conclusive that those at the last of the Church age will be judged before those at the first. And the reward – reigning with Jesus Christ for 1,000 years in a glorified, resurrected body (*eternal life, or 'life for the age'*) – was the same for each group (remembering we have already established that only the overcomers so qualify for this reward).

If we accept the premise (which I believe will be demonstrated conclusively hereinafter) that there is more than one rapture, then it is obvious that the different groups mentioned in the parable appear at different times for their rewards. We see those early in the morning; those at the sixth and ninth hour; and those at the eleventh hour.

Those early in the morning – it is apparent that this includes at least the Twelve Apostles, if not limited to them only. Jesus recruited (hired) the Apostles in the very beginning, and He told them their exact wages:

Matthew 19:27-30

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? 28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. 30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

After telling them they would *"sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"*, Jesus then uttered this concluding statement – that *"many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first"*. This group was told their specific reward (*"a penny a day"*).

But those who came after the Apostles were told only that they would receive *"whatsoever was right"*. They did not know their exact reward; they trusted that the Lord would reward them with what is right. And neither do we know our exact rewards; only that, if qualified, we will receive eternal life (life for the

age); this includes ruling and reigning with Christ in a glorified body. This is an awesome thing to contemplate in and of itself. But as to any specific rewards within this description (5 cities, 10 cities, etc.), we can only trust that we will receive what is right.

1 Corinthians 4:9

For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

When the early laborers complain that they "*have borne the burden and heat of the day*", I do not believe it is a reference to the length of time they labored in the earth before they died. Rather, I believe it is a reference to the long time (nearly 2,000 years now) that they have been awaiting rapture from the Bosom of Abraham – the place of all departed Christian souls. This was discussed at length in Chapter Eighteen.

So then, when *will* the Apostles be rewarded? Let's take a peek forward, and see this in the book of Revelation, just prior to the Seventh Trumpet:

Revelation 11:18

And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

This Pre-Trib rapture is in fulfillment of the promise to the overcomers:

Revelation 3:10

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

One final note on the 24 elders – many teach that these are representative of the angels who presently rule with God in the heavenlies. I have but one comment to make on this:

If the 24 elders shown in Rev. 4 are angels shown casting their crowns as they resign their positions of rule, then why are these same 24 elders shown sitting on these same thrones throughout the remainder of Revelation?

#2 - Recognition of the Martyrs

This recognition of the martyrs happens at the 5th Seal:

Revelation 6:9-11

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

White robes are given in fulfillment of the promise made to the overcomers:

Revelation 3:5

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

3 - The General Harvest Rapture

The Great Multitude

Revelation 7:9-17

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

These also are a separate group. That this group includes only living saints is because "*these are they which came out of great tribulation*". You must be *alive* to be delivered *out of* any tribulation. Logically, only living persons can be delivered out of the Great Tribulation. Saints dead at the start of the Great Tribulation would not have gone through any of this tribulation period from which to be delivered.

John has now witnessed the opening of six of the seven seals and the destruction and chaos these "beginnings of sorrows" bring upon the inhabitants of the earth.

Then we see three visions embraced in the results of the breaking of the sixth seal: first, the awful disturbances which fill the world with consternation; second, the sealing of the 144,000, and here the multitude of palm-bearers before the throne. The first two of this particular series relate to the earth and to people in the flesh; the one which we are now to consider relates to heaven and to people in heaven. What it presents is subsequent in time, both to the great shaking and the gracious sealing of the 144,000. The great and terrible Day of the Lord is not one ordinary day of twenty-four hours. All these seals, and the varied occurrences under them, belong to that day; but it is very apparent that each of them happens over a continuous period of months and years. The vision now before us refers to one section in a series of successive judicial wonders.

Some of the seventeen prophecies in Daniel and Revelation have ordinal numbers in them. This feature forces events to occur in chronological order. For example, trumpet four has to occur between trumpets three and five. There is no wiggle room on this point. The same is true for the seven seals and the seven bowls. If the chronological order stated in the Word of God cannot be trusted, no one has the authority to tell the whole world God's intended order. I reject out of hand any interpretation that forces an unnatural order of events other than the chronological order presented in the book of Revelation.

These palm-bearers stand before the throne, and before the Lamb. They shout and praise God for their redemption. The angels form a grand circle around them; with the Throne, with the living ones and the elders, as described in the fourth chapter, being in the center. They are arrayed in bright robes, are acknowledged as servants of God, and pronounced forever free from tribulation, and from whatever might distress them or interfere with their state of blessedness.

The twenty-four elders are distinguished in various particulars from the palm-bearing multitude:

- a) They sit; the palm-bearers stand.
- b) They have crowns and thrones; the palm-bearers are not said to have either.
- c) The elders appeared in their places and received their rewards *before* the sorrows of judgment began; the palm-bearers only come to their place before the throne *after* the judgment has progressed to the sixth seal.
- d) The elders were in heaven before "the hour of trial" came, being "accounted worthy to escape all these things" (Luke 21:36); the palm-bearers were in that "trial", and only reach heaven "out of the tribulation, the great one".

It is, therefore, a great mistake to confound these palm-bearers with the highest order of saints.

Neither do these palm-bearers represent the Church universal at the end of the Tribulation. We have that in Rev. 19, in its own proper place; such Church universal includes all these several separate classes of the redeemed. If they were to represent the finally complete Church, how do we account for John's mental questionings and uncertainties with reference to these palm-bearers? Did he not know that the Church was to be thus exalted and glorified? Was he so ignorant of the character and destiny of that chosen body of which he was an apostle and a chief, as not to know it, or whence it came, upon encountering it in heaven? Would this not be a sorry impeachment of his apostolic character and enlightenment, besides very stupid and unreasonable? The apparent fact that he was perplexed and in doubt with reference to these palm-bearers, and that the elder interfered to solve his questionings, proves that they are not the Church universal, but only a portion of the entire Church body.

Moreover, it is a false interpretation of the elder's words to understand them as if these palm-bearers had passed through the entire duration of the judgment troubles before reaching the position in which John beholds them. The language corresponds with the order of succession in these several visions, and suggests that these palm-bearers cease to be in the Great Tribulation before its final termination. It is not said that they pass through it, but that they come out of it, thus leaving it behind them to run on after they are gone.

Some argue that "the Great Tribulation" is realized only under the seventh seal, during the murderous domination of the Beast and the False Prophet; and that since these palm-bearers "come out of the tribulation, the great one", we must necessarily throw this vision forward, and nearer to the extremity at which all tribulation ends. (Jesus did describe the last 3 1/2 years of the 7 year period as the "Great Tribulation." But for simplicity's sake, my use of "Tribulation" refers to the entire 7-year period.) But this is a mistake. That which the Scriptures describe as "the Tribulation", though inseparably linked with the Judgment, is made up of more than one blast. There is a tide in it, dividing it into sections. Referring back to the second, third, fourth, and fifth seals – to the red horseman, taking peace from the earth and filling it with strife, havoc, and bloodshed – to the black horse of scarcity and famine – to the pale horse, with death-plague on his back and greedy Hell at his heels, overrunning the world – and to the persecution and butchery of people for their faithful testimony for God under the fifth seal – we behold an accumulation of sufferings and horrors which, if they do not belong to the Tribulation of the judgment times, I don't know how to place or call them. Consider that at least one-fourth of the population of the whole world has now been killed. And as these palm-bearers do not appear upon the heavenly scene until *after* the opening of the sixth seal, they "must needs" have been partakers in these dreadful things, and hence, are rightly described as coming out of "great tribulation", though translated and in heaven before its last blasts smite the guilty world.

These are Christians whom the firstfruits rapture found unprepared (they were not "ready"); these are some, but not all, of the "foolish virgins". These are some of the ones Jesus described as "and the other left" (Matt. 24:40-41). These came "afterwards" (*"Afterwards came the other virgins" - Matt. 25:11-12*). These were too late to make the first rapture, but they repented, "*went to them that sell, and bought for themselves*"). This "buying for themselves" is not salvation of the spirit, for that is a free gift. This buying is the purchase price for the 2nd portion of the Holy Spirit, which is purchased by denying self, and taking up the cross, and following Jesus. This is the "losing of life" on earth, in order to gain it in the next world. These Christians matured very rapidly (relatively), because they endured the heat and persecution and grief of the first six seals. This judgment from God is sent to punish the wicked, but it is also designed to "dry out the wheat", so that these may become "perfect and entire, wanting nothing", and thus be counted worthy, if not to escape *all* these things, then to escape the horrendous judgments still coming, which grow successively worse and worse.

This is the third rapture, which I have labeled the "General Harvest Rapture" – simply because it was such a great multitude that no man could number out of every nation, and tribe, and people, and tongue. But still it is *not* the rapture described in 1Thes. 4:14-17. That rapture includes the "dead in Christ", and again we have shown that this is a rapture of the living only.

This "great multitude" were not recognized as worthy to enter the marriage ("the door was shut) and ("I know you not"). Some of these had been "Left Behind" in the firstfruits rapture; others had been born again during the previous six seals, and had matured rapidly because of intense persecution and awful tribulation.

Though these were denied entrance to the marriage (the Bride of Christ), they are nonetheless in an exalted position. They are still part of the Church of the Firstborn. They are not the highest, but the *second* rank of rule. They will reign and rule with Christ – but their thrones will be over the earth, and not in the third heaven. Thus, we have the explanation why they were not noted as having thrones in this scene – they must wait until the millennial kingdom is established, when they will assume the thrones they have already been awarded at the Judgment Seat. In the meantime, they are "before the throne of God, and serve him as priests "day and night in his temple".

The great majority of the professed Church of that day will be "left behind" at the firstfruits rapture. A great multitude of those left behind will turn themselves in sorrowful earnestness to follow their Saviour, for *"when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness"* (Isa. 16:9).

But not by any means will the entire original group left behind thus turn unto the Lord. Some of those may still have need of further drying out, which the coming judgments can adequately perform. Meanwhile, of course, the unbelievers - the corrupt world - will continue to be the same base and God-defiant world, until the waves of Hell go over them forever. *"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly"* (Dan 12:10).

As the calamities thicken and deepen, evil will become more predominant, and rush with giant strides to its final consummation. But amid much painful disappointment, regretful tears, and great tribulation, Laodiceans, who thought they were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, will discover how wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked they really were when Jesus spewed them out of His mouth. But they will repent, and profit by their chastenings, and though having lost many rewards, they will nonetheless find themselves happy to follow Him in the fires of judgment of the first six seals.

Having been "left" when the elect were "taken", John would naturally be surprised to find them in heaven. Having come under the judgment pains, he would naturally infer that heaven was not for them. Hence, his silent astonishment at beholding so large a company of overcomers exalted into the presence of God; and hence, the special explanation of the elder.

This is one of Christ's messages from heaven to his people on earth:

Revelation 16:15

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

The implication of the elder's words is that these people had failed to comply with these conditions while the judgment delayed; they were worldly in their temperament, had their "garments spotted by the flesh", and so were without right to the promises to the overcomers. Having made themselves at home in the ways of this world, they had no claim on heaven at the firstfruits rapture.

They have "palms in their hands". The joy of the feast of tabernacles is theirs. God ordained for his ancient people that, after the harvest was gathered, they should take the branches of palm trees, and dwell in booths, and rejoice before Him, as the Lord that brought them up out of Egypt. And so we read in Nehemiah, that *"all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity"* (Neh. 8:17), as they found written in the law, fetched olive-branches, and palm-branches of thick trees, to make booths and sat under the booths, *"and there was very great gladness"*. These were the most joyous, exultant, and bright seasons observed by the Israelite people. They were times when everything glittered and thrilled with deep, pure, and lively joy. And these palm-branches in the hands of this white-robed multitude connect with this ancient feast of tabernacles, and speak of their grand exultation because of their deliverance.

To this also answers the further description, which represents them as *"crying with a great voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb' "*, while angels, and elders, and

living ones fall down on their faces in reverent adoration, and answer, "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen".

Thus, we see the *Third Rapture*, the "General Harvest Rapture" in all its glory.

#4 - Rapture of the Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:12

And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

The above verse describes the rapture of the Two Witnesses, which occurs after the 2nd Woe (the 6th Trumpet judgment.) This occurs at the midpoint of the Great Tribulation. These two witnesses are in a special class; they are the forerunners of the Mid-Trib rapture of all dead and living saints. For purposes of this book, I will label this Third Rapture as the Rapture of the Two Witnesses.

#5 - The Gleanings Harvest Rapture

Revelation 11:18

And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

Please take note that two distinct groups are described here in Revelation 11:18:

(A) *...and the time of the dead, that they should be judged,*

(B) *and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great;*

All the previous raptures, listed before as one through four, exclusively concerned those saints alive at that time. We see this principle in the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, where Jesus clearly taught that the last (those born last in time, and still alive) shall be first (shall be judged first).

Matthew 20:8

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire (reward) beginning from the last unto the first.

Matthew 20:16

So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

This principle was discussed in detail in the chapter on the Olivet Discourse.

Now, at this point in the Revelation sequence, it is time, according to Rev. 11:18, for the dead (group A) to be judged. The Greek word for "judged" (Strong's 2919) is "κρίνω" (krinō), and it is defined as "to try, condemn, punish: - avenge, conclude, condemn, damn, decree, determine, esteem, judge, go to (sue at the) law, ordain, call in question, sentence to, think. So group A is to be punished. Whereas, we see that group B is to be "rewarded" (*....thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants.*)

It is easy to let this distinction slip by, but the verse is clearly describing two separate groups.

Describing group B, 1Thess. tells us they are the "dead in Christ":

1 Thessalonians 4:16

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Who are the "dead in Christ"? These are the dead - overcomers and non-overcomers alike. All the dead will be raptured at this point; but only the overcomers will then receive their resurrection bodies.

We learned in an earlier chapter concerning the Three Orders of Resurrection that these orders are as follows: (1) Christ, the Firstfruits; (2) afterward they that are Christ's at His coming; and (3) those at the end (1Cor. 15:23-24). And who are "they that are Christ's" at His coming? Scripture further defines this as:

Galatians 5:24

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Those receiving their resurrection bodies at this time are "they that are Christ's at His coming".

Have all Christians crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts? Most assuredly not. These are the non-overcomers. These chose to "save their lives here"; now they must "lose their lives there" (Luke 17:33) in the Second Death (for Christians) (this is discussed more fully in Chapter Twenty-Three, "The Second Death".) Recall that Jesus, in the letter to the church in Smyrna, stated that the overcomers would not be "hurt" of the second death. Conversely, those who do *not* overcome (the vast majority), *will* be hurt of the second death. Simply put, this means these non-overcomers, who were raised from the dead in this passage in Rev. 11:18a, will die again at the Judgment Seat of Christ (the "hurt" of the second death.)

Revelation 2:11

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

These non-overcomers are those of whom Jesus said, "*I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity*" (Luke 13:27). These are those who fail to "*enter in at the straight gate*" (Luke 13:24). These will not be awarded their glorified, spiritual bodies at this time. They will rise from the dead in their flesh and blood bodies, only to be rejected at the Judgment Seat and cast into Outer Darkness for 1,000 years. These are the "*slothful servants*" of Matthew 25:30. They will receive their resurrection bodies at the end of the thousand years. These are those of whom Rev. 20:5 says, "*...but the rest of the dead [in Christ] lived not again until the thousand years were finished*".

Also described in this same event is:

Revelation 12:5

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

This is the Manchild. This is the time in history that the gates of Hades can no longer hold the dead in Christ (in the Bosom of Abraham). This is the time of which Jesus prophesied:

Matthew 16:18

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell [hades] shall not prevail against it.

The complete event in Scripture is described below:

Revelation 12:1-6

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

A tense, extraordinarily pregnant crisis, involving the vastest issues, balances two hostile forces in the unseen. Jerusalem - a 'woman', in the Apocalypse, always symbolizes a city - sums up God's redeemed of all dispensations, for one City has been the mother of them all, from Abel to Christ.

Galatians 4:26

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Twelve stars (the Patriarchs); around her head, the moon (the Law) under her feet; and the sun (Christ) clothing her; and she is on the brink of giving birth. Watching her with concentrated venom is a Serpent, a red Dragon, for he is responsible for the blood of all the martyrs ; and his passionate concentration is on the destruction of the "child" about to be born. It seems exceedingly probable that this is the exact situation at the present moment, though no man living can tell how prolonged the period may be during which Satan watches in intense anxiety.

Suddenly the Man Child is born. That this "child" is a body of saints is obvious from the words in which (ver. 11) the angels describe it:- *"they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb"* ;* and this birth, like our Lord's (Heb. 1:5), is a birth out of the tomb. It is a rapture in which these saints are caught up to God and His Throne. The holy angels hail with joy their arrival in Heaven: the evil angels draw the sword for the first and last time to prevent it. The Man Child is very definitely and sharply defined as fellow-kings with our Lord in His coming Reign, for it is *"a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron"*

Some of these are "overcomers" - *"they overcame him,"* thus falling exactly within the requirements of our Lord's promise to Thyatira (Rev. 2: 26) - *"He that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron."*

[Note: the fact that the "birth" ushers in the final three and a half years of Satan's activity alone makes it impossible that the "child" is Christ. Christ, unlike this Child, was the first-born of His mother; nor did evil angels dispute His ascent - only His exit from the tomb (Col. 2:15). Furthermore, John was instructed earlier in Revelation:

Revelation 1:19

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

"The things which thou hast seen": the glorious vision of Jesus and the seven stars and the seven candlesticks.

"The things which are": the seven churches of Asia.

"The things which shall be hereafter" - the scene in heaven after the Pre-Trib rapture, and all the events thereafter, including the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials of wrath.

Therefore, since the vision of the manchild falls into "the things which shall be hereafter", such manchild described here cannot be the birth of Christ.

Two escapes of those alive at this point are accomplished here: (1) A physical escape on earth -1/3 of the Jews alive at this point obey Jesus' command (Mat 24:16-22) and flee into the wilderness. (2) A physical escape from the earth - Christians who are alive and remain, regardless of whether they are "accounted worthy" or not. And all dead saints are raptured at this point (*...the dead in Christ shall rise first*).

After both escapes are accomplished, the earth is now temporarily emptied of all the godly born-again. However, now the angels take over the job of proclaiming the gospel: *Rev 14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.* Many are born-again under this preaching. So at this point the enraged Dragon concentrates on both groups: "The dragon made war with THE REMNANTS of her seed", and there are two of these remnants - (1) those "*which keep the commandments of God*", and (2) those "*which hold the testimony of Jesus.*" ""Keepers of the commandments of God" (the Law) are a definition of Israel; they who hold - that is, those in whose keeping is - "the testimony of Jesus" is a description impossible of any but a Christian; it has been a definition of Christians for nineteen centuries; it is the only name given to Christians throughout the eighteen prophetic chapters of the Apocalypse, and describes even the Apostle John himself (Rev. 1:9). Two-thirds of the Jews in Palestine are slaughtered; and the Christian martyrs under Antichrist after Mid-Trib are so numerous that they form a class by themselves (Rev. 20: 4) on the opening of the Kingdom.

There remains one final rapture of those living "Post-Church" Christians who are born again after Mid-Trib. This is the 6th Pre-Wrath rapture which occurs just before the 7 Vial Judgments; after that rapture, there will be no Christians remaining on earth (Luke 18:8 - *When the Son of Man cometh, will He find faith on earth?*)

I should interject a point here: neither the sheep nor the goats were saved. It is obvious that *neither* the sheep nor the goats knew the Lord (Mat. 25:31-46). They both asked the same basic questions. God's plan

is that all Christians should escape - *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ (1Thess 5:9).*

The mid-trib rapture is also described elsewhere in Scripture:

1 Thessalonians 4:16

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Immediately thereafter, we see the rapture of those "which are alive and remain".

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The term "*we which are alive and remain*" has been misinterpreted to mean those of us who are alive and "remain on the earth" at the time. However, this interpretation is redundant, because those of us who are alive at the time would *obviously* also be remaining on the earth. I believe the phrase means "those of us who remain on the earth, having been 'left behind' in the Firstfruits Rapture and the Harvest Rapture".

Let me say again that it is most precious and significant to find in both verse 15 and verse 17 the qualifying clauses "*we that are alive, that are left*". Now to be alive is obviously to be left on earth; why, then, is there this very apparent and seemingly unnecessary repetition? Because it implies that these people described - though alive - were not taken in a previous rapture. Would Paul enlist himself among this class of people who are alive and are left? Not at all. He uses the word "we" only because he is speaking at that moment of writing, and the proof of this is that since Paul no longer lives today, he cannot be numbered among those who are left on earth.

The verb in question is the Greek word "*perileipo*", which means "*to leave all around; to survive, to remain*". It is only used twice in the New Testament, both times exclusively in this passage (vs. 15, 17). The ASV seems to capture the correct thought behind the "*we who are alive and remain*" as translated in the KJV. The thought is "*we that are alive, that are left*" (from the previous raptures.) And note that this rapture is not selective - that all Christians remaining on the earth are now taken. Thus, those described here had indeed been "left all around", or "left behind" in the previous raptures.

This is the *gleanings* rapture of all remaining Christians, and these are all part of the fifth rapture. It is the gleanings rapture, because the Firstfruits and the General Harvest Rapture had not removed all the grain from the Field.

Leviticus 23:22

And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God.

This rapture occurs at Mid-Tribulation.

And we know that it is not God's plan that Christians should endure the wrath of God, for it is written,

1 Thessalonians 5:9

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

The "salvation" referred to above is salvation from the wrath of God, which in the context of this instance is brought about by the physical escape through rapture of the wrath to come.

Never in the Bible does harvesting carry with it a bad connotation. Unlike grapes on a vine, wheat cannot remain too long in the field after ripening. Wheat must be reaped *immediately*. The first mentioning of harvest in Scripture is found in Gen 8:22. Being a harvest, it is a token of God's blessing. When the Lord speaks of harvest (John 4:35), He means it well. According to Matt. 3:12, wheat is to be gathered into the garner; this is a general description of all the raptures.

Matthew 3:12

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

This is a perfect description of what happens at all the raptures. Apparently, at the Mid-trib rapture described in 1Thess 4:15-17, the saints (dead and alive) are caught up to the "air".

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

That statement does not require that the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSOC) itself takes place "in the air". They are all gathered to be with Him in the air, and are then taken to appear before the JSOC which may be elsewhere (other than the third heaven) and is described as "the garner". But there is more to consider. For clarity, I repeat the above verse:

Matthew 3:12

12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

In the above verse we once again see that this event is likened to the harvesting of wheat (which has firstfruits, general, and gleanings). But notice the wheat is gathered into His garner. The garner – or *barn* as we would say – is not the home. The garner is between the field and the home. The home is discussed in John:

John 14:2

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

So it follows that it is we are raptured to the air, and then taken to heaven to face the Lord at the JSOC. But we are not admitted to the Father's house, until *after* the JSOC. In the Father's house is where the Throne of God is. No one can physically appear before the Throne of God – in His presence – without a glorified, resurrected body.

1 Corinthians 15:50

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

But a body of flesh and bone - not sustained by blood, but by the Spirit – such as Jesus now has, can certainly enter the Father's presence.

Luke 24:39

39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

This is the primary reward given at the JSOC, which Paul strived to attain:

Philippians 3:11

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

That there are no men presently in heaven in the Father's presence (except, of course, the God-Man Jesus) can be seen here:

1 Timothy 6:16

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Apparently, that includes Enoch and Elijah, also. I'll leave that as food for thought.

So we see that Christians in *any* harvest are first taken up to the air. Consider the description in Mark:

Mark 4:26-29

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; ²⁷ And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. ²⁸ For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. ²⁹ But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

Here we have a description of what has happened in each of the previous raptures under consideration. "*But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle*". When the wheat is ripe, then immediately it is harvested. At the time of the first and second raptures, God only takes the "ripe" Christians. However, in the case of this *fourth* rapture before the seven vials of God's wrath are poured out, there is a major difference.

In the Firstfruits and the General Harvest raptures the Lord only harvested those Christians who were "ripe" - those who were "ready"; those who would qualify for Salvation of the Soul at the Judgment Seat of Christ; those who were mature Christians alive on earth at the time of their rapture.

In the second rapture, at the 5th Seal, all those martyred in Christ were raptured.

In the third rapture, which I have termed the "General Harvest Rapture" - those Christians who were brought to maturity by the first six seals were raptured. This rapture consisted only of mature believers

alive at the time. If the numbers do not seem consistent, consider this. Very few went in the first rapture. At this moment in history there are more people alive on the earth than the total of all that have died to date since Abel. Most estimate the population of the earth at this moment to be at least in excess of 7.2 billion, and it is growing rapidly every day. Of this 7.2 billion, I have no idea how many are professing Christians, but the number must be large. Most of the professing Church was left behind at the first rapture; so the great multitude, including those who became born again during the first six seals, must represent a very large number combined. And indeed they are so described in Rev. 7:8 as a "*great multitude that no man could number*".

In the fourth rapture, the two witnesses were raptured as forerunners of the coming fifth rapture.

In this *fifth* rapture (Mid-Trib), however, all the then living Christians are taken. This group appears on the scene with little explanation. Their description is rather limited – they had "gotten the victory over the beast", etc.; they stand on the sea of glass; they have the harps of God; and they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. But it is obvious from the location of their description in Rev. 15:2-4 that they were the immediate result of the Gleanings Harvest Rapture of Rev. 14:14-16.

Many of these have been saved by the preaching of the 144,000 evangelists. After this rapture, there are no Christians remaining on earth (but some, termed "Post-Church", will yet be born again during the remainder of the Tribulation. This is why God sends "*another angel*" (and not a Christian) *to fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth* (Rev. 14:6-7). Up until this point, the preaching of the gospel was a work given only to saved men. But now all the saved are totally absent from the earth. But God still has His witness in the earth:

Revelation 14:6-7

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth.

Those who may be born-again during the time subsequent to this fifth rapture are only mentioned briefly:

Revelation 14:13

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

The Rapture of the 144,000

Revelation 14:1-5

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

It is obvious from the above verses that a group of 144,000 had been raptured to heaven. They are singing a new song "before the Throne", and they have been "redeemed from the earth".

We know from Scripture that they are the *"firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb"*. These are the *firstfruits* from the *nation of Israel*. The "general harvest" from the nation of Israel will occur when "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26). That particular "general harvest" (as applies to the Jews) is not a rapture, however; those will be the flesh and blood Jews who are saved just prior to Christ returning to earth to set foot on the Mount of Olives, when they "shall look upon Him whom they pierced" (John 19:37; Zec. 12:10). Those saved Jews will enter the kingdom as saved flesh and blood people with flesh and blood earthly bodies; and they, along with the Gentiles classified as "sheep" at the separation of the sheep and goats, will populate the earth during the millennium.

Leviticus 23:15

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: 16 Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. 17 Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD.

That this *"fine flour"* was to be *"baken with leaven"* at once proves that it is not Christ, for no offering that stands for Christ was ever offered with leaven, which was strictly forbidden (Lev. 2:11); besides, the Sheaf of Christ had gone long before: here is a holy group - two loaves, Jew and Gentile, consecrated 'for Jehovah'; yet with the leaven of indwelling sin up to the very moment of rapture.

The first group (or loaf) is the Church of the Firstborn, *"they that were ready"*, at the first rapture. These are firstfruits to the Lord from the Holy Nation, the Church. (1Thes. 4:14-17; Rev. 4:4-11; Rev 5:9-10; Mat. 24:40; Luke 21:36; Mat. 25:10; etc.)

The second group (or loaf), is the firstfruits from the nation of Israel, the 144,000 born-again Jewish evangelists seen raptured at Mid-Tribulation (Rev. 14:1-5). *"These were purchased from among men to be the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb: they are without blemish"* (Rev. 14:4). So here is another rapture.

I choose not to elaborate extensively concerning the argument as to who these 144,000 are, except to say that I believe they are the same 144,000 sealed by God at the end of the sixth seal. Why would the Holy Spirit describe a group of 144,000 earlier in the Book of Revelation, and then not tell us afterwards their final disposition? Regardless of their identity, this group is raptured after the 6th trumpet, and before the 7th trumpet – this is also at the midpoint of the Tribulation.

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, it is not my intention to carry the discussion of the events noted in the book of Revelation further than the aforementioned raptures. Such a lengthy discussion is beyond the scope of this book.

Thus we have the *Fifth Rapture* – Mid-Trib.

#6 - Pre-Wrath

Revelation 16:15

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

A thief comes to take only that which is valuable to him. When Jesus comes as a thief, it is to take away His redeemed.

Revelation 14:15

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

This occurs just prior to the pouring out of the seven vials of wrath. The 7 vials of God's wrath are poured out in the last 19 days of Daniel's Seventieth Week. These vials of wrath are utterly cataclysmic; were they to be poured out earlier there would be no flesh surviving on earth at the end of the Tribulation.

The 10 plagues were poured out by Moses upon Egypt (a type of the world) over a period of 19 days; similarly, these final 7 plagues will be poured out over the same period.

These are the last of any Christians remaining on the earth, and we see them in heaven in the following verse:

Revelation 15:2-3

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

Thus, at this point in time, just prior to the Lord's physical return, we see the implied answer (No!) to Jesus' question:

Luke 18:8

I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

#7 - Post-Trib Rapture of the Tribulation Martyrs

Revelation 20:4

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Here we see evidence of the rapture, or the raising from the dead, of the tribulation martyrs. These were martyred during the the seven-year Tribulation.

This is the seventh rapture seen in the Book of Revelation. Before we leave the subject of rapture, I have a few other pertinent comments to make.

Voices, Thunderings and Lightnings

A careful observation will reveal interesting circumstances surrounding each time you see the phrase "*and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings*" in the book of Revelation. This phrase, or one very similar, precedes each wave of God's judgments on the earth. But it is also interesting to note that they also, in a less obvious manner, precede each of the raptures. It's as if the Holy Spirit placed these as "markers" in Scripture.

Revelation 4:5

And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

This phenomenon is placed immediately after we see the twenty-four elders (the Firstfruits Rapture Harvest) in heaven – having been raptured, rewarded, and placed on thrones. This also precedes the opening of the first seal.

Revelation 8:5

And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

This same phenomenon occurs just after we have seen the "*great multitude that no man could number*" (the General Harvest Rapture). They have been raptured, rewarded, and are serving God day and night in His temple. But it also just precedes the sounding of the first trumpet, when the second wave of God's judgment commences.

Revelation 11:19

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

And again, we see this happens just after (considering the information in chapters 12-14 is parenthetical to the order of events in time) the "Gleanings Harvest Rapture" in Rev. 15:2-4, and just prior to the first vial that is poured out in Rev. 16:2. Also, this happens after the two witnesses are raptured (Rev. 11:12).

The last time we see this phenomenon is at Rev. 16:18, just after the Pre-Wrath Rapture seen in Rev. 18:4.

I believe these "markers" are significant in that they are placed strategically to alert us to what is about to happen in judgment on the earth, but at the same time they emphasize the deliverance of certain groups of believers just before God escalates His wrath.

In conclusion to this chapter, I wish to direct your attention to a chart of the order of the events described in this entire book. This chart is titled " Things That Will Be Hereafter". It is a rather detailed and complicated diagram, and because it measures 11 inches by 10 1/2 feet, I found it too cumbersome to include as part of the book in its continuous form. Therefore, I have provided it in the form of separate pages of the "Seven Sealed Scroll". This diagram hopefully will be very helpful for you to understand and locate the myriad of detail presented in this book. However, I recommend you not study the chart until you reach the very end of the book, as there are still things you need to learn in order to understand it fully.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Objections and Questions Answered

Throughout history, God's people have often been slow to believe His warnings. In days of rebellion they have always used certain facts of privilege to attempt to escape the truths of accountability:

Jeremiah 7:4-10

Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. 9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

The Jews knew that they were privileged to possess the Lord's Temple. They therefore rejected Jeremiah when he sought to warn them concerning the consequences of sin. The prophet Malachi also confronted God's people when they were using privilege to escape any fear of judgment:

Malachi 2:17

Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

Malachi 3:15

And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

Many Christians use these same types of objections today to deny God's warnings to the saints in the New Testament. But the Lord is taking note of all who will fear Him and believe His warnings! The heart of man is more than able to conceive of many objections. Nevertheless, there are answers for anyone who is willing to believe the Scriptures regardless of the cost.

Is This a Dreadful, Terrible Doctrine?

The threat of severe punishment at the Judgment Seat is a terrible idea to feelings that have been roaming carefree. The Bible agrees and freely uses such words to speak of the coming judgment upon unfaithful Christians:

2 Corinthians 5:10-11

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

In deciding to believe or reject the doctrine of a conditional millennial kingdom, it might help to remember that a great number of modern, professing Christians believe something far more dreadful and terrible than anything this book maintains! They believe that if the Christian does not keep up a certain degree of works he loses salvation and burns for trillions of years and onward into endless eternity! Others teach that the Christian must keep up this standard of works to prove he is really saved to begin with. If he falls below the quota-line (whatever that is), again, he is destined to burn for eternity in torment. In either doctrine, one must be good or burn in torment for billions of years without end. The message to the Christian in these horrible views is the same, "Be good or suffer for endless eternity in fire." On the other hand, the message this book brings to the Christian is, "Be good or suffer loss for 1,000 years." It is indeed dreadful, but it is not a crippling, horrendous insanity that must be upheld in self-righteous, Pharisaical delusion if it is to remain at all in the forefront of the mind.

How Good Does the Christian Have to Be?

As an objection, many people wonder how good one has to be to enter the millennial kingdom. Yet, this objection entirely misses the point. Christians are never to have absolute assurance that they have finished the race while they are in the midst of running it! That is the very way to lose a race:

1 Corinthians 10:12

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Christians are certainly to have absolute assurance they are saved in final eternity. And they are also commanded to have assurance that Jesus Christ has provided everything needed to finish the race and win the millennial prize. Nevertheless, this is all very different from presuming that we have already won the race when there is still much work left to do.

The answer to the objection is that we are to never stop and rest until the Day of Rest comes. We are to never assume we are already good enough. We are to fear, hope and strive until the end. On the other hand, we must also beware of doubting the provision or mercy of God in regard to the kingdom. We must not despise all that Jesus has done to provide power to run the race and win. Many Israelites missed the Promised Land for such unbelief in God's power.

This accountability teaching does not create a special clique of Christians who think they have attained above others. In fact, it is the very thing that guards against such attitudes by promising severe punishment for self-exaltation:

Matthew 18:1-4

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

True kingdom believers do not yet think they have obtained the prize:

Philippians 3:11-14

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Furthermore, kingdom believers might ask others how good they have to be to think themselves saved in eternity. If Christians must look to their works for assurance of eternal salvation, how much fruit must we possess? The answer that is given is the answer the kingdom believer will give in return!

Or how good do we have to be to win a jewel on a crown at the Judgment Seat? Many teach that there is no punishment at the Judgment Seat. They teach that there is only the obtaining of various crowns. But why do they not ask how good we must be to obtain a crown? When we speak of real punishment many suddenly desire to know where the line is. Yet, they cannot tell us where the line is even in regard to their own souls in eternity. Their whole objection reveals that the idea of losing a few jewels on a crown where there is a street of gold was never that big a threat to them in the first place. Yet, when we mention 1,000 years of banishment to the Outer Darkness, suddenly we have their attention! They want to know how good we must be. This alone manifests the impotent theology of those who will not believe the accountability truths of Scripture.

Isn't It Wrong to Fear God?

Many imagine that believers should only respect or reverence God. They therefore are opposed to the idea of truly fearing Him:

Isaiah 8:13

Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

But notice that the Bible uses "fear" alongside reverence:

Hebrews 12:28-29

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Verse 29 would make no sense unless "godly fear" means real fear. The fear of God is to be greater in our lives than the fear of physical death:

Matthew 10:28-29

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

Certainly, such a fear would bring true trembling. This is Biblical:

Philippians 2:12

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

The "salvation" in the above verse refers to salvation from the power of sin in the Christian life, which is linked to Salvation of the Soul into the millennial kingdom. The Christian is to tremble in fear at the thought of despising the power of God in the Christian walk. To do so places one in grave danger of missing the kingdom.

This idea of trembling may at first seem contrary to Christian joy. Christians are indeed commanded to live a life of rejoicing in God's promises. Yet, true joy comes from truth. Running from Christian warnings will not bring true joy. The Bible links joy and fear together in a beautiful harmony. They may seem contrary to one another (like the Humanity and Deity of Christ, freewill and the Sovereignty of God, etc.); however, they both have their proper place:

Psalms 2:11-12

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Matthew 28:8

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

There are some fears that Christians should not have. Certainly, believers should never fear a loss of eternal salvation (1Cor. 3:15). Also, they should not fear man or circumstances above God (Isaiah 41:14):

2 Timothy 1:7-8

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

Paul is in prison and it appears that Timothy is tempted to fear persecution. Yet, such Bible passages have absolutely nothing to do with the fear of God. History is filled with thousands of martyrs who were able to overcome the fear of man because they truly feared God.

The Bible calls Christians to fear before they sin, as a deterrent to sinning; fearing after sin is proper, but it is not the ideal:

Hebrews 10:26-27

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

The Christian should walk in pre-sin fear (i.e. the fear of displeasing God and missing the kingdom). If he falls into willful sin through a lack of adequate pre-sin fear, he must now walk in post-sin fear! The torment of the latter should quickly drive him to confession and repentance.

All believers will sin and will pass often between pre-sin fear and post sin fear to some degree. The one fear keeps the Christian from sin; the other drives him to quickly repent while there is still time.

In conclusion as regards this question of fearing the Lord, then, there are two great motives to holy living. They are love and fear, and in the nature of things they are complimentary for the reason that God is both to be loved and feared. He is to be loved for what He is, and what He does for His creatures both in creation and redemption; and He is to be feared because of His holiness, His hatred of sin, *and the certainty that He will punish it*. In the very nature of things the man who loves God most will fear Him most. The Scriptures say, "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them (and them only) His covenant*" (Psa. 25:14). Yes, even of the Lord of glory it is said, "*He was heard in that He feared*" (Heb. 5:7). How blessed it would have been for the children of Israel if at Kadesh-Barnea they had feared the unbelief and disobedience of their own hearts rather than the giants and walled cities of Canaan.

What About the Promises That Believers Will Not Be Condemned?

This question has already been answered earlier in this book; I will repeat the answer here and expand upon it somewhat.

The first text often cited to object to accountability truth is Romans 8:1. Does not Romans 8:1 teach that there is no condemnation for Christians?

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It is certainly true that a Christian will never be judged for his sins in all eternity.

Christians have been justified, declared righteous, on the basis of Christ's past, finished work (Rom. 5:15-19). Because of this, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to [a rendering of judgment against'] them which are in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 8:1). *It is not possible for a Christian to ever appear in judgment where matters pertain to the salvation which he presently possesses*. Judgment has already occurred. God judged sin - that which separates man from God - in the person of His Son, and God is satisfied.

The impossibility of a Christian ever coming into judgment, as brought out in Rom. 8:1 pertains strictly to his salvation for all eternity. One's eternal destiny, at the moment he places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes a settled, closed matter; and for a Christian to ever be brought into judgment where the issue at hand pertains to his eternal destiny would be to bring into judgment once again that which God has already judged - the finished work of His Son.

Actually there is no such thing as a future judgment - for either the saved or the unsaved - where the issue will involve eternal salvation or eternal damnation. This will not be an issue, it cannot be, at the Judgment Seat of Christ where Christians appear; nor will it be an issue, it cannot be, when the unsaved appear at the judgment of the nations preceding the millennium or at the great white throne judgment following the millennium. In all three instances, judgment with respect to the eternal destiny of those being judged will have *already occurred*, with the issue *already settled*.

John 3:18 makes this very clear:

John 3:18

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

For the believer, judgment is *past*. Sin has been judged in the person of God's Son; and sin's penalty, which is death, has been paid. For the unbeliever, judgment is likewise *past* ("condemned ['judged']" is the translation of a word [*krino*] appearing in the perfect tense in the Greek text, showing a judgment completed in past time with the results presently existing in a finished state). The unbeliever has already been condemned; he has already been judged and is presently occupying this state. Insofar as one's eternal destiny is concerned, no judgment awaits the believer, and judgment has already fallen upon the unbeliever.

To Be Judged According to Works

One should note very carefully that it is "works" which come under review at all future judgments in Scripture, whether of the saved or the unsaved (1Cor. 3:13-15; Rev. 20:12, 13; Ezek. 20:34-38; 44:10-16; Matt. 25:34-36, 41-43; Rev. 20:4). And since man's works can have nothing to do with eternal salvation, something other than issues surrounding one's eternal destiny would have to be in view. Judgment relating to eternal salvation or eternal damnation must be a past matter in every future judgment, with individuals appearing at a particular judgment (of either the saved or the unsaved - never a combination of the two), wholly on the basis of that which has *already been determined*. Those for whom "there is therefore now no condemnation ['a rendering of judgment against']" will appear at one judgment, and those who have been "condemned ['judged'] already" will appear at another judgment, entirely separate from that of the redeemed.

According to the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, Christians will appear before Christ in judgment to ascertain *how much each person has gained through trading and trafficking in the Lord's business during His time of absence* (Luke 19:15). There is nothing whatsoever about judgment relating to one's eternal salvation or eternal damnation in these parables. Such would be impossible. These are parables showing the household servants, those in possession of eternal salvation (those who cannot be called into judgment relative to this matter), being called to an accounting by the Householder at the time of His return.

The Householder will gather "his own servants" before His Judgment Seat - the Judgment Seat of Christ - to reckon with them on the basis of their faithfulness or unfaithfulness in carrying out assigned duties in the house during the time of His absence (*works* emanate out of "faithfulness", and it is *works* which will come under review). Works also include fruit which, through obedience to the Holy Spirit, God was able to produce in the Christian. Faithfulness, producing works comparable to "gold, silver, precious stones", will result in commendation and reward; and unfaithfulness, producing works comparable to "wood, hay, stubble", will result in rebuke and loss. That which will be in view, as an end result of this reckoning, has to do with the household servants either being accorded or being denied *positions of power and authority as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom*.

Insofar as the unsaved appearing at either the judgment of the nations in Matt. 25:41-45 or before the great white throne in Rev. 20:11-15 is concerned, judicial issues relating to eternal salvation or eternal

damnation likewise cannot come into view. Individuals not in possession of eternal life (those upon whom the wrath of God abides, who have already been judged relative to their unbelief) will be judged on the basis of their own works, with their *eternal destiny already a settled matter*.

The condemnation referred to in Romans 8:1 pertains to judgment of the Christian's works only.

Therefore, the verse actually teaches that there is no "condemnation" as long as the Christian is not walking in the flesh! This same teaching is found a few verses later:

Romans 8:13

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Walking and living refer to works in the Christian life. Paul states elsewhere that Christians can be condemned:

1 Corinthians 11:34

And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

1 Timothy 5:11-13

But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; 12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. 13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

Christians who have been disobedient in this present time will be temporarily condemned at the Judgment Seat. This means they will miss the kingdom because of walking in the flesh instead of after the Spirit.

Jesus teaches that not a hair of His disciple's heads will perish:

Luke 21:16-18

And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. 17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. 18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

Many that oppose the accountability truth of this book are quick to clutch Luke 21:18. Yet, they will not embrace the warnings from the Gospels to the disciples! If the promises of eternal security apply to all Christians, then so do the warnings of millennial banishment in the underworld apply to all Christians.

Notice Luke 21:18 again. It is a promise of final resurrection. It cannot be taken in an absolute sense, for verse 16 clearly states that some believers will be physically slain. Therefore, if physical destruction in this life does not overthrow the promise of Luke 21:18, then temporary punishment at the Judgment Seat and during the millennium will not overthrow it. All Christians will be perfected in bliss after the millennium. Not a single hair will literally perish from any saint.

Other Scripture passages which speak of no condemnation (such as John 3:16-18) are referring to the final, eternal age. They do not offer immunity from punishment in this life or in the millennial world to

come. The promise of never perishing has to do with eternity on the Last Day. The majority of believers have already perished physically. And multiple Scriptures warn unfaithful believers that they may also perish during the millennium. Yet, no Christian will ultimately perish in eternity (1Cor. 3:15).

There is a widespread, *false* teaching in Christendom today which states that all of a Christian's sins - past, present, and future - were taken care of through the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary; and, on the basis of the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, a Christian can never come into judgment for any sin which he commits. And therefore, warnings concerning God's judgment to be visited upon individuals indulging in the sins of the flesh cannot be directed toward Christians.

Romans 8:1 is one of the verses usually cited to support this line of teaching.

However, this verse, contextually, isn't even dealing with eternal salvation. It is dealing with the existing warfare between the man of flesh and the man of spirit. That is what lies before the verse in chapter seven, and that is what lies after the verse in chapter eight. The context on both sides of this verse deals with problems which *this body of death* presents.

The latter part of the verse - "*who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit*" - has been questioned by numerous textual critics over the years. This part of the verse is in the Textus Receptus and would account for it being in the Authorized Version. It is also present in a number of other manuscripts, though it is also absent in a number of different manuscripts as well.

This questioned section of Scripture fits perfectly within the text if one remains within context. However, the opposite of that will be true if one departs from the context and attempts to use this verse relative to eternal salvation. Erroneously viewing this verse relative to eternal salvation probably accounts for the absence of this latter part of the verse in most of the modern-day translations (*e.g.*, NASB, NIV). And viewing the verse after this fashion may, as well, account for the absence of these words in many of the manuscripts which we have today.

A Christian's positional standing *in Christ*, which can never be subjected to judgment beyond Calvary, is one thing; but a Christian's present existence upon this earth *in a body of death*, with a responsibility to expel the leaven, is something entirely different. And Rom. 8:1, contextually, deals with the latter, not the former.

Because of the existence of this *body of death*, housing the old sin nature, Christians can and do sin. In fact, because of this *body of death*, Christians cannot live apart from sin, which necessitates Christ's present high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Sin is wrought in the lives of believers through the old sin nature: "*If we say that we have no sin [old sin nature], we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*" (1 John 1:8). And the abiding presence of this old sin nature places believers in a position where they can and do sin, necessitating the promise seen in 1 John 1:9:

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Sin manifested in the lives of believers will, without exception, be dealt with by the Lord in one of two ways:

- 1) through the present *high priestly ministry of Christ during the present day*, or
- 2) through the issues of the coming *judgment seat of Christ during that coming day*.

Christians can either judge their own sins now, confessing them and receiving forgiveness, or they can await the judgment seat of Christ and have their sins judged by the Lord (I Cor. 11:31, 32; 2 Cor. 5:10, 11; 1 John 1:9; 1 Peter 4:17).

Christ is presently exercising the office of *High Priest* in the Holy of Holies of the heavenly tabernacle for the former, and he will exercise the office of *Judge* at the judgment seat of Christ for the latter. Confession now will result in cleansing, but waiting will result in chastisement.

Christ is exercising the office of High Priest to affect *a present cleansing* for the "kings and priests" which He is about to bring forth. These "kings and priests" will be manifested as the "sons of God" at the end of this dispensation and fill positions of power and authority as joint-heirs with Christ in the kingdom. The judgment seat will reveal their approval to occupy these positions.

However, there is another side to the judgment seat. Not only will certain individuals be *approved*, but other individuals, because of the sins of the flesh, will be *disapproved*. Christians who, today, refuse or neglect to avail themselves of the high priestly ministry of Christ will have their sins dealt with before the judgment seat; and this will be done, not by Christ as *High Priest*, but as *Judge*. Chastisement will then follow; and numerous Christians in that day, because of the sins of the flesh, will be shown to have forfeited their inheritance, resulting in their disqualification for positions as joint-heirs with Christ.

The Error of Balaam

Jude 11 records "the error of Balaam", 2 Peter 2:15 records "the way of Balaam", and Rev. 2:14 records "the doctrine of Balaam." All three of these are used in passages referring to Christians entering into a state of affairs within Christianity which not only defiles their high calling but also dishonors the Lord Who purchased their salvation with His Own blood.

The *error* and *way* of Balaam appear in companion portions of Scripture and would seem to refer basically to the same thing. The *error* of Balaam is associated with "reward" in Jude, and the *way* of Balaam is associated with the "wages of unrighteousness" in 2 Peter. Thus, the *error* and *way* of Balaam have to do with "monetary gain"; and, according to the Old Testament account, this monetary gain is acquired through one's willingness to compromise the principles of God and proclaim things contrary to the revealed Word of God.

The *error* and *way* of Balaam can be found in Numbers, chapters twenty-two through twenty-four. Balak, king of the Moabites, hired Balaam to come into his land and pronounce a curse upon the children of Israel. Balak had seen what Israel did to the Amorites; and knowing that this nation would soon be passing through his country, he was afraid. He feared the Israelites because of the power which the nation exercised through God.

Balak knew that the only way the Israelites could be defeated was through severing the relationship which existed between Israel and God. Thus, Balak hired Balaam to come into Moab and pronounce a curse upon the Israelites, incurring God's anger upon them in order to sever this existing relationship and to ultimately bring about their defeat at the hands of the enemy. However, once in Moab, on three separate

occasions, only blessings proceeded from the lips of Balaam. Balak was angered by the turn of events and sent Balaam out of Moab into his own country.

The Doctrine of Balaam

The *doctrine* of Balaam is different than his *error* and *way*. His *doctrine* had to do with that part of his teaching which was contrary to the Word of God. However, an inseparable relationship exists between his *doctrine*, *error*, and *way*. That part of his teaching which was contrary to the Word of God (his doctrine) resulted from his willingness to prophesy either good or bad for monetary gain (his error and way).

And, remaining within this same framework, it would be little different among servants of the Lord today. One's willingness to compromise the principles of God (the error and way of Balaam) - for whatever reason - would precede and be inseparably linked to teaching that which was contrary to the Word of God (the doctrine of Balaam).

1) *Doctrine of Balaam - Past*

Scripture surrounding the doctrine of Balaam and its tragic results is given in Num. 25:1-3:

Numbers 25:1-3

And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. 2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. 3 And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

The Israelites, after coming into Moab, began to commit fornication with the "daughters of Moab", eat meat sacrificed to idols, and bow down and worship the gods of the Moabites. In order to put a stop to these sins and stay the hand of God's judgment upon the entire nation, Moses was instructed to slay every Israelite who had "joined himself unto Baal-peor." And twenty-four thousand Israelites perished under God's judgment because of these sins.

What caused the Israelites to depart from the one true and living God Who had delivered them from Egypt? What caused them to begin serving false gods and following the idolatrous ways of the Moabites? The answer is given in Num. 31:16:

Numbers 31:16

Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

Balaam could not curse Israel. Only beautiful prophecies filled with blessings flowed from his lips when he was called into Moab by Balak. But Balaam did succeed in leading the Israelites astray through his counsel. The Israelites, through the counsel of Balaam, were led to commit fornication, eat things sacrificed to idols, and bow down before other gods. And, because of these sins, the judgment of God fell upon His people.

The counsel of Balaam - i.e., "the doctrine of Balaam" - had to do with the sins committed by the Israelites in view of their covenant relationship with God. Briefly stated, this doctrine had to do with the fact that the Israelites were the covenant people of God, this covenant could not be broken, and consequently the Israelites could sin with immunity.

However, such was not the case. It was true that the covenant established between God and Israel could not be broken; it was also true that Israel's position as firstborn could not be changed; but it was not true that Israel could sin with immunity. God's wrath was manifested because of the sins of His people, and the thousands of Israelites who succumbed to the counsel of Balaam were overthrown in the wilderness short of the goal of their calling.

2) *Doctrine of Balaam - Present*

The doctrine of Balaam is one of the most widely taught doctrines in the Church today. Christians know - as their counterparts in the Church in Pergamos (Rev. 2:14) - that they have been saved by grace through faith, and nothing can alter their positional standing "in Christ." In view of this unalterable positional standing, they reason that they can conduct their lives in any manner which they choose and it will make no difference (except perhaps a loss of some jewels on their crowns).

However, as in the case of the Israelites, so it is in the case of Christians. Christians, as the Israelites under Moses, have been saved for a specific purpose. Every Christian is enrolled in a race (I Cor. 9:24-27), and every Christian is engaged in a conflict (Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Tim. 2:4, 5). The goal set before Christians is to win the race, be victorious in the conflict. And God has made provision for Christians in order that at the end of the race they might say with Paul,

2 Timothy 4:7-8

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

The enemy, Satan, on the other hand, is doing all within his power to bring about defeat in the lives of Christians. Satan's main objective in the present warfare is to prevent Christians from qualifying for crowns and thus positions of rulership with Christ in His coming kingdom. God is presently bringing into existence a new order of *sons* to replace the order now ruling in the heavens; and the incumbent rulers - Satan and his angels - are doing all within their power to retain their present governmental control over the earth.

The main facet of the doctrine of Balaam which is being widely promulgated in Churches today is the teaching that future blessings and rewards are guaranteed for every Christian solely on the basis of Christ's finished work on Calvary and the Christian's positional standing "in Christ." Thus, we have the false teachings that all Christians - regardless of their conduct during the present time - will receive crowns and positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom.

However, the teaching throughout the Word of God is to the contrary. The Israelites did not sin with immunity, and neither can Christians. Sin in the camp of Israel resulted in the Israelites being overthrown in the wilderness, short of the goal of their calling. And it will be no different for Christians.

"...and I took the crown that was upon his head" (2 Sam. 1:10; Rev. 3:11).

What Can Separate Us from the Love of God?

Romans 8:38-39

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Those who would use this verse to deny chastisement at the Judgment Seat and during the millennium for unfaithful Christians do not understand the love of God:

Proverbs 3:12

For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

Proverbs 13:24

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

God made some Christians sick in Corinth. He killed others (1Cor. 11). This is not a separation from God's love, but rather a proof of it. The same thing will occur at the Judgment Seat. The chastisement is temporary.

What Loving Father Would Kill His Children?

The Bible teaches strongly against child abuse (Eph. 6:4). It should be obvious to any sane man that the manner in which God deals with His children cannot be used as an absolute example of how we are to deal with our own children. The Lord made some saints sick in 1Cor. 11:30-32! How God deals with grown people is not how man should deal with children. However, we can glean principles. For example, God's love for His children is unconditional. Any chastisement we receive from Him is only temporary. To understand how God deals with believers we must remember that God is not only our Father; He is also our Judge and our Master. As God, He has rights over our lives that no earthly parent has over his or her own child. There is, therefore, room for the literal warnings.

What About 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17? Doesn't This Militant Against Selective Raptures?

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

This passage has been previously correctly identified as applying specifically to the time of the Seventh Trumpet in the book of Revelation. It is true that all Christians will be raptured, including the dead in Christ, at this time. The confusion comes when it is not considered that there have been several selective raptures previous to this time – specifically, the Firstfruits Harvest Rapture, the General Harvest Rapture,

and the 144,000 Rapture. The incident referred to in Thessalonians is specifically the Gleanings Harvest Rapture. For a refresher on this subject, you may want to refer back to Chapters 22 and 23.

What About 1 Corinthians 15:51-58?

The promises in 1Cor. 15:51-58 must be interpreted in light of the warnings and implied conditions revealed in the context and in the rest of Scripture:

1 Corinthians 15:51-53

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

This passage speaks of receiving a glorified, resurrected body, and that some will not even die. To receive a glorified, resurrected body at this time is a reward, not a privilege, and it pertains only to those who inherit the Kingdom of God. Earlier in this *same* book of 1 Corinthians Paul states that some will be excluded from inheriting the Kingdom:

1 Corinthians 6:9

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

So since not everyone will inherit the Kingdom of God, then not everyone will receive the resurrected body to which he refers at this time.

Notice that the whole chapter begins with a condition:

1 Corinthians 15:1-3

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, IF ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

Since the salvation referred to above is conditional ("if"), then it cannot be the salvation of the spirit. Rather, it is the Salvation of the Soul, the subject of this book.

As already noted, the "gospel" contains two sides. The Gospel is that "Christ died for our sins." He died for our sins in two ways. He died to forgive us of our sins so we may live in eternity. This is positional forgiveness. But Christ also died to save us from the power of our sins that we might stand without shame before Him at His coming. Christians that refuse to "*keep in memory what I preached unto you*"- the "promises of the Gospel (in relation to fighting sin and reigning in the millennium) - will be unable to overcome in their battles. They will not be "saved" (1Cor. 15:2) into the millennium at the Judgment Seat. Instead of standing before the Lord in glory, they will stand before Him in naked shame (1 John 2:28).

They will therefore have to wait until after the millennium to receive the glorious resurrection to immortality.

Paul teaches that there are three times when glorified bodies (which will never die again) will be given:

1 Corinthians 15:23-24

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

Christ was the first to resurrect in glory, never to die again (1Cor. 15:23, Col. 1:18). Next, there will be a resurrection of faithful Christians at His second coming. Yet, Paul, in 1Cor. 15:24 also reveals that there is one more time of resurrection to immortality. This occurs at the "end" when the millennial kingdom has ended. Unfaithful Christians who miss being glorified before the kingdom (they will be raised to judgment, but they will not be raised to immortality) will have to wait until the Great White Throne to receive their incorruptible body and get victory over death:

Revelation 20:15

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:15 implies that there *will* be people found in the "book of life" after the millennium.

It appears that those who use 1Cor. 15:51 to deny the full kingdom teaching are simply taking the promise out of context. Paul has already stated that this quickening is conditioned upon dying daily for Christ. And he has plainly revealed that there is an "order" to the resurrection. Some must wait till the "end" after the kingdom.

One last point should be noted in regard to verses such as 1Cor. 15:51 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (also see the "every man" in 1Cor. 4:5). If these few passages will be used to deny all the other clear warnings and conditions, then the door is opened for the Universalist heresy:

1 Corinthians 15:22

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Unbelievers will never be raised to *immortality*. But certainly, all mankind will be made alive – in a flesh and blood body – to stand before the Great White Throne judgment; and afterwards to experience the second death when those not found written in the Book of Life are cast into the Lake of Fire.

But the "all" here is limited to believers. The following passages would also teach Universalism if taken at face value (Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:20, 3:11, Revelation 5:13, 1Cor. 7:7, 17, etc.). If these promises must be limited by context and the united testimony of Scripture to believers in general, then it is no wonder that some promises addressed to believers must likewise be limited to only faithful believers. The Universalist is rightly reproofed for emotionally grasping at a few verses while ignoring scores of other warnings. Yet, many Christians are guilty of the same approach! The warnings concerning millennial exclusion greatly outnumber the two or three verses that appear to teach that "all" Christians will be glorified and reign in the millennial kingdom with Christ.

Is This Legalism?

True legalism is turning our eyes to works for justification in eternity. It has to do with working for initial salvation (a serious error). Initial salvation is given through faith alone. But the kingdom promises are not obtained through faith *alone*:

Hebrews 6:11-12

And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: 12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

It might be proper to also use the word "legalism" to refer to any teaching that places New Testament believers under commands that conflict with New Testament law. This is far from saying that believers are not commanded to obey the commands of the New Testament. The fact that Christians have commands to obey to obtain rewards and escape chastisement is not legalism; if it is, then Jesus Christ and all the other apostles and New Testament writers were legalists.

The warnings to believers in the Bible exist. They cannot be denied or ignored. Either they teach that true believers can lose eternal salvation, etc., or they teach that true believers can lose the millennial kingdom. Any other view except the latter has Christians striving to be saved; stay saved, or proves that they are saved. Thus, the only view that is not legalism is the view that applies the warnings to the millennial kingdom. The only other options are to ignore the warnings or water them down.

Doesn't the Old Testament Teach That the Kingdom is Endless?

Many point to Bible passages in the Book of Daniel and elsewhere in the Old Testament to attempt to prove an endless kingdom that begins when Christ returns (e.g. Isaiah 9:7, Daniel 2:44, etc.) If the millennial kingdom does not come to an end, one might argue that the doctrine of eternal security is compromised by the doctrine of kingdom exclusion presented in this book.

First, such words as "everlasting" often contain relative meanings. We have already demonstrated in a previous chapter that some passages that appear to teach an endless kingdom are simply revealing that nothing can or will overthrow it *throughout its ordained duration*.

Secondly, it is a common principle of prophetic interpretation that many Old Testament passages contain dual or stacked applications. There are many Scriptures that speak of Christ's first and second comings at the same time. Therefore, it is possible that many passages that appear to be describing an eternal kingdom are actually revealing the final and endless age on top of the millennial age. They read as one event (i.e. one kingdom), as if there is no division between the two different ages (see the same type of thing in Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:17-20).

It is also true that God has always been and always will be King. Wherever He rules there is some type of His kingdom present. This does not mean that the phrases "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of Heaven" as used throughout the New Testament refer to this endless Sovereignty of the Father. They refer to a special glory of Jesus Christ (given to Him by the Father) during the millennium:

Luke 9:26

For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

Jesus will indeed also appear in His Father's glory when He reigns in the millennium. This glory and dominion will never end. Nevertheless, the special, millennial glory of Christ (with its throne and kingdom) does come to an end:

1 Corinthians 15:23-28

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Revelation 20:4-5

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

The reign of Christ and His faithful servants in "His own glory" will only last one thousand years. This kingdom will indeed end. Nevertheless, the reign of Christ in the glory of the Father will be an absolute, endless dominion. The majority of "kingdom" passages in the New Testament refer to millennial glory since they are in the context of prizes and warnings.

There are many Bible passages that reveal that unfaithful Christians will be released at the end of their punishment (Matt. 18:34, 1Cor. 3:15, Rev. 20:13-15, etc.). Therefore, they do not lose the absolute, eternal kingdom for disobedience. The kingdom warnings are "millennial."

Do the Warnings Apply Solely to Jews or Great Tribulation Saints?

When Christians are confronted with Biblical accountability truth they often reply, "These warnings are in the Gospels. They do not apply to us." When they are then given the warnings from Hebrews, they reply, "These warnings in Hebrews, like those in the Gospels, are Jewish, and they do not apply to us." When they are then given the warnings in the Book of Revelation (written long after Paul's revelations) addressed to the Churches, they then reply, "These warnings are in the Book of Revelation, not Paul's Gentile epistles." When they are then given warnings in Paul's Gentile epistles they reply, "You are reading into them. These warnings to the saints do not teach punishment at the Judgment Seat and banishment during the millennium." The reader is therefore encouraged to open the Bible and read plainly the following warnings that are found in Paul's Gentile epistles. They are not contrary to the warnings to

believers in any other book of the Bible (Rom. 8:13, 17, 11:20, 21, 14:12, 1Cor. 3:15-17, 6:7-10, 9:24-27, 10:1-12, 22, 11:29-32, 16:22, 2 Cor. 5:9-11, Gal. 5:19-22, 6:7, 8, Eph. 5:4-7, 6:9, Phi. 3:10, 11, Col. 1:22, 23, 3:25, 1 Thess. 4:6, 1 Tim. 2:15, 3:6, 5:6, 12, 6:8, 9, 2 Tim. 2:12, 13, etc.).

It is contrary to the principles of literal interpretation to state that warnings are not applied doctrinally to the people to whom they are addressed! The warnings to the Seven Churches in the Book of Revelation are not historically addressed to future Israel or future Gentiles in the tribulation period; they are addressed to first century Christians:

Revelation 1:11

Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven Churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

This message is sent to seven literal Churches. The Lord did not say "which WILL BE." The Bible teaches that the words of the Holy Spirit may certainly be applied to future saints. Yet, the application to future saints must never replace or uproot the application to early saints to whom the words are originally addressed. If we say that the message to these Seven Churches did not apply to seven literal Churches in the first century (and therefore to all Churches in all ages before the tribulation period), we have laid the interpretive foundation for amillennialism. What then becomes of the Old Testament promises and warnings to Israel? Many maintain that Israel really means the Church in this age. If a message to Churches in the first century is really a message to Churches 2,000 years or so later in a different age, then why not teach that the Old Testament promises to Israel apply directly to all Christians in this age and deny any application to literal Israel?

The text itself plainly teaches us how we are to divide the Book of Revelation:

Revelation 1:19

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

The messages to the Seven Churches are the "things which are." It is not a future message to people in the tribulation period (though they can still draw comfort from the words).

The exhortations, promises and warnings to the Seven Churches reveal that the message is addressed to Christians before the tribulation period:

Revelation 2:13

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Antipas refers to a literal person in the first century. If these are tribulation epistles, then who is Antipas?

Revelation 3:10

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

It would appear strange to promise to keep people from an hour that they are supposedly already living in!

It is therefore erroneous to claim that the warnings and promises to the Seven Churches (as well as the warnings in the Epistle to the Hebrews, etc.) do not apply doctrinally to the people in the first century to whom they are addressed. Secondary or prophetic applications of Scripture (when they can be proven to exist) must never uproot the primary application to the original Christians to whom such Scripture is addressed.

What about the Intermediate State?

Many wonder where departed Christians will go before the resurrection and the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is clear from Scripture that the doctrine of soul sleep is error. Luke 16 alone reveals that people are conscious between death and the resurrection.

Often this question is in the form of an objection to millennial exclusion. The reasoning is that it would appear strange to have some believers enjoying bliss in Heaven for centuries (in spirit), only to depart to the Outer Darkness at the time of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The topic of where the spirit, soul, and body go at the death of the Christian has already been discussed in Chapters Sixteen and Eighteen. Without this basic understanding, much confusion can result.

What About the Popular Christians That Never Believed This Doctrine?

Many that wish to object to kingdom-accountability truth will point out the numerous men and women that were used by God which never believed such a doctrine. But more Christians believed this truth in the past than many realize! Nevertheless, it is true that many well-known, fruitful Christians did not believe it. Is this therefore a good justification for rejecting it?

Many of the founding fathers of America were Deists. Yet many crusaded valiantly for justice, liberty and general morality. If lost men can bring about so great a change in civilization, certainly it is no great wonder that many Christian men and women wrought great changes in the world with only a limited knowledge of prophetic subjects. However, it should be remembered that in previous centuries almost all notable leaders (lost and saved) stressed the fear of God as a motive for moral living! Daniel Webster (a great American statesman) largely summed up the religious thoughts of the majority of great men in earlier ages when he stated, "The greatest thought that has ever entered my mind is that one day I will have to stand before a holy God and give an account of my life."

Many great Christians did not believe in millennial exclusion simply because they were never taught it. They will be judged for the light and opportunities they were given (Luke 12:47-48).

Some wonder how the doctrine of millennial exclusion could be true since God used many fiery fundamentalists, missionaries and revivalists who never understood it. But did not God also use such men as Charles Finney and Jonathan Edwards? Yet, Finney and Edwards not only did not understand millennial exclusion, they totally rejected premillennialism altogether! They were postmillennial. Paul taught that postmillennialism would overthrow the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:18). But sometimes these

doctrines take a few generations to eat away (as a canker) at the foundation of faith and manifest their rotten fruits (2 Tim. 2:17)

And what about the great number of preachers that God used that denied eternal security? Many of these old preachers would not hesitate to view most modern Christians as damned for absolute eternity if they were alive today! Some of these Arminian Preachers often made confusing statements, as if they were catching a glimpse of the doctrine of millennial exclusion (John Fletcher, etc.).

Yet, it is probable that these men made no distinction between millennial exclusion and eternal damnation. Or, perhaps some held to both doctrines, based on the degree of failure.

The fact that God has used people with great doctrinal errors is nothing new. One only has to think upon such Bible characters as Samson, Cyrus, Balaam, etc., to see that God often accomplishes much through those inclined to human error. Notice the great work wrought by Saul:

1 Samuel 28:3

Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

1 Samuel 10:11

And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?

Nevertheless, Saul had great sins. It is therefore no wonder that God has used many people who never understood the great truths of the millennial kingdom as a reward.

Some fundamental Christians in the twentieth century appeared to have accomplished much while only fearing the loss of jewels on a crown. What could these Christians have accomplished had they understood the full accountability truth in regard to the millennium? Certainly, their converts would have been more grounded. If these preachers ran fast and hard with whatever motivations they had, they could have done even more with the truth of kingdom exclusion.

Many are gifted to be great workers. They are not slothful. Perhaps these can appear to stay busy without the kingdom truths. Nevertheless, a large part of our Christian stewardship is preaching the truths of the kingdom of God to others. For whatever reason, many Christians failed in this regard. But what about those around them which were not as gifted? What about those who might have run with more diligence had they heard the great kingdom hopes and warnings? What about those who spent their lives troubled about their own salvation because many of their teachers did not understand the warning passages?

The Lord will bring everything to light on the day of the Judgment Seat of Christ (1Cor. 4:2-5). Until then, it would not be wise to reject any truth simply because some other Christians appeared to thrive without it. Often the rotten fruit of weak and heretical doctrine is only fully manifested in the next few generations.

Doesn't the Bible Teach That Our "Works" (and Not Our "Sins") Will Be Judged?

How very emphatic is Col. 3:25:

Colossians 3:25

But he that doeth wrong (assuming that he has not made it right) shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Surely that is plain enough. Those who hold the theory in question say it is the believer's works and not his person that is to be judged. Is it conceivable that an evil work, apart from the person who does it, can be judged, the sentence executed and justice satisfied thereby? How would the theory work in civil jurisprudence? Suppose society should say, "We will let the murderer go free, but we will judge and punish the deed". Wouldn't this be absurd? Christ bore the believer's sin and sins on the cross judicially. But this will not save the believer from sinning; nor from reaping as he sows.

The Bible reveals that Christians can be judged for "sins" (1 John 5:16-17, James 1:15, 2:9, Heb. 10:26, Rom. 6:16, 1 Tim. 5:24). There must be a distinction made between position and practice (i.e. walk). No believer will be punished judicially for sins after salvation in a positional, eternal sense. However, there are temporal judgments (in this life and during the millennium) for the sins of believers. The semantic distinction that is often made between bad works and sins is erroneous. Evil works are sins.

Doesn't the Bible Teach That Every Man Shall Have Praise of God?

1 Corinthians 4:5

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

This verse is easily answered in the same manner as 1 Thess. 4:17 and 1Cor. 15:51. The "every man" is not absolute. The previous chapter makes this clear (1Cor. 3:15). Those that maintain that "every" must always mean "absolutely every" when referring to Christians should spend some time debating Universalists!

If Christian leaders would search the Scriptures for proof of punishment at the Judgment Seat with the same intensity that they search them for any jot or tittle that can be used to deny it, this present book would be largely unnecessary. The context, however, seems to show that it is a question of the source from which the praise comes, rather than an affirmation that all will have praise. The apostle tells the Corinthians that it is a very small thing with him to be judged of them or of man's day, in contrast to the Lord's Day when praise will come from none other source, but from God.

If Paul Was Not Sure of Millennial Entrance, How Can Anyone Be Sure?

This same question could be asked in regard to any view of the Judgment Seat of Christ. How can anyone be sure of crowns? How can anyone be sure that they will not stand in shame before Jesus (1 John 2:28)? Whatever standard of holiness is required to win a crown and escape shame is the same standard required to escape millennial exclusion.

However, it should be noted that Paul was not sure of his own millennial entrance during most of his life. But just before his death, the Lord revealed to him that he had indeed won his crown:

2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.⁷ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

A Christian writer once objected to the truths of millennial exclusion by comparing this doctrine with the uncertainty of Arminianism. However, millennial exclusion actually reinforces the certainty of eternal salvation! It gives the warnings addressed to the saints their proper place and thereby insures that they will not be misapplied. When these warning passages are wrongly applied to eternity, humble believers are robbed of their assurance.

The Bible teaches that some Christians do enter the millennial kingdom and reign with Christ. Therefore, God's standard is not impossible to meet. He provides the daily strength to overcome. He does not require absolute perfection. He requires that we fear His warnings and seek His mercy in repentance before we die or arrive at the Judgment Seat.

What about James Chapter 2?

Many attempt to mix saving faith with works on the basis of James 2. They then argue that all the warnings apply to professors, and that the Christian must continue to bring forth fruit to prove that he is truly saved. Yet, James 2 is addressed to people that are already saved:

James 2:1

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

These Jewish believers are admonished in regard to their Christian walk. Therefore, the Judgment Seat of Christ is the context of this chapter, not eternity. To be saved at the Judgment Seat (i.e. escape chastisement), the Christian must add works to his faith. Faith alone saves us in eternity. Faith and works saves us at the Judgment Seat (Heb. 6:12). The word "saved" is sometimes used in the Bible for escaping physical death in this life (Acts 27:31). Certainly, then, it can also be used for escaping death at the Judgment Seat and during the millennial kingdom! James refers to Abraham's faith and works in Gen. 22. This was years after his faith alone in Genesis 15 (which Paul uses as an example of eternal salvation in Rom. 4).

There are two justifications in the Bible. One is by faith; the other is by works. Abraham was justified by faith when he believed God. (Rom. 4:3). He was justified by works when he offered Isaac upon the altar (James 2:21). The first justification was Salvation of the Spirit. The second justification was Salvation of the Soul, the subject of this book. Both are necessary for entrance into the Kingdom of God.

How Can Christ's Body Be Punished at the Judgment Seat and During the Millennium?

Many argue that since they are part of Christ's body they are therefore immune from punishment at the Judgment Seat and during the millennium. Yet, why then aren't Christians immune from scourging in this life (Heb. 12:6)? Some of the saints in Corinth were made sick and some were actually slain (1Cor. 11:30). If this is possible in this life, it will certainly be possible in the day of recompense!

How Can the Holy Spirit That Indwells Believers Be Present in Hell During the Millennium?

The Holy Spirit is Omnipresent:

Psalms 139:7-8

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

Job 26:6

Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.

Proverbs 15:11

Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

Christians have suffered chastisement and persecution for centuries. They have been burned at the stake with the indwelling Spirit. God is not bound by His creation. God is not inside the universe. The universe is inside of God (Acts 17:28, Heb. 1:3).

Furthermore, we have already examined the distinction between Hell, the abode of the lost, and Geheena, or the Outer Darkness, which is a temporary place of chastisement for Christians. It is unfortunate that the translators of the Bible failed to always make this distinction.

Did Not Jesus Pay for Our Sins at Calvary?

Jesus paid for all our sins, past, present and future, as far as eternal salvation is concerned. No sin can ever rob a believer of eternal life on the Last Day (after the millennium). Yet, there are sins that Christians commit as children of God. And God's children are held accountable for their faults (if they do not confess their transgressions and seek mercy in fear). Almost all modern Christians allow Jesus the right to reward good works. Shall He not also reward the bad deeds? If Jesus is not free to judge unfaithfulness at the Judgment Seat, He is not free to judge it in this present life. Yet, almost all commentators admit that the Lord judges His saints in this life (1Cor. 11, Heb. 12). The distinction in Scripture is therefore between temporary and eternal judgment. Christians can never be judged eternally for their sins since Jesus has paid the full price for them on the Cross. Yet, the sins of believers can bring temporal judgments, and the millennium is temporal. The forgiveness of sins in regard to believers is not automatic, and it must be maintained (Matt. 6:15, 18:35, 1 John 1:9). The God who measured the earth and waters in exact proportion (Isaiah 40:12) has also ordained the exact measure of chastisement for unfaithful saints. Yet, many claim that Jesus may chastise saints (and even kill them, as in 1Cor. 11) as long as He remains

INVISIBLE to our physical eyes. However, if He APPEARS as JUDGE, they claim He is no longer allowed to cause harm or affliction. This idea is preposterous (Luke 12:46)!

How Can a Person with a New Nature Be Punished at the Judgment Seat?

A person with a new nature can be punished at the Judgment Seat the same way that he can be punished in this life! Who is it that can lose crowns at the Judgment Seat according to the common view? Who is it that can appear in shame? It is the Christian. Therefore, the Christian can also be punished at the Judgment Seat and banished to the underworld.

How Do We Know If We Have Confessed Our Sins Enough?

Sometimes, sincere Christians who fear God's warnings, wonder if they have neglected to repent of certain sins, or if they have repented enough to escape millennial exclusion. Sometimes these questions are raised as objections to the teaching; however, if the truths of millennial exclusion are not true, then the warnings to the saints must be applied to eternity. Yet, the questions concerning repentance would still remain. Only, the consequences of not repenting properly or enough would be eternal, not millennial and temporary!

Furthermore, these questions concerning repentance would also still apply to any view of the Judgment Seat. The common, modern view sees only shame at the Judgment Seat. How much repentance is required in the Christian life to escape this shame?

We can arrive at confidence concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ; yet, we should never have certainty in this life (1Cor. 10:12). The Bible teaches us to hope in the Lord's mercy (Psa. 33:18). Yet, we should never gamble. We should confess and forsake all known sin and pray for the Lord to reveal more to us. We must be careful of provoking God by accusing Him of being impossible to please (Heb. 3:15-19). He is merciful and longsuffering. Every Christian that fears His warnings, walks in obedience, and quickly, sincerely repents when he or she fails, can have confidence of victory at last:

Hebrews 3:6

But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Remember, in the Parable of the Talents, the servant who was given five talents and the servant who was given two talents both came boldly before the Lord with the increase in talents they had wrought.

Many of the Warnings Cited Do Not Directly Mention the Judgment Seat of Christ

How many warnings to lost people directly mention the Great White Throne? Unless we will neutralize all warnings to lost people that do not mention the Great White Throne, we should not neutralize the warnings to saints that do not directly mention the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Is This a Jehovah's Witness or Seventh Day Adventist Teaching?

Some have noticed that accountability teacher D.M. Panton edited The Dawn Magazine and they have confused this with Jehovah's Witness terminology. There is no connection. Panton stated that he

intentionally wanted to seize back a good word, and that he refused to let the word remain a monopoly of a false sect. The accountability truth of this book is so greatly removed from Jehovah's Witness and Seventh Day Adventist (i.e. annihilationist) teaching that it not only maintains that God burns the lost for all eternity in torment, it maintains that true Christians are in danger of literal, temporary punishment when Christ returns. Judgment begins at the House of God (1 Pet. 4:17)!

Are Not the Warning Passages in the Gospels Great Tribulation and Second Coming Passages?

Jesus commands His disciples to teach His words to Gentiles until he returns (Matt. 28:20). The warnings apply to His people in whatever stage of His second coming. Does John 14:1-3 alter the Judgment Seat? Most apply it to saints in this age. The same people are addressed in John 14 as in Matt. 25:19. Does not Paul warn us about those who would ignore the Lord's words?

1 Timothy 6:3-4

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;⁴ He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

If a teaching changes a command in the Gospels, we are free to disregard it as a direct, doctrinal command for our lives. However, the warnings of Jesus to His disciples are never changed. The remainder of the New Testament confirms them!

Furthermore, most apply the positive promises in the Gospels without saying they are misappropriated. It is also a fact that the earliest Church fathers (for 300 years) applied the Gospels to saints. They were premillennial.

Shouldn't We Follow the Majority?

Christians must follow the Word of God, not the popular, religious majority. In fact, it has been proven over and over again that the majority (especially in an age of religious corruption) is usually wrong. The Bible speaks about the religious majority in the last days, and it is not a pretty sight:

2 Timothy 4:1-4

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

There are many "fables" that Christians have embraced in this day and age. One fable that tickles and soothes the "itching" ears of carnal Christians is the doctrine that Christians are never in danger of being punished at the future Judgment Seat after death. It is wise to boldly receive the light of Scripture and refuse to be intimidated by the modern majority. A.T. Pierson (1837-1911) once stated:

"Brethren, we have a saying, Great is the truth and will prevail: but this is never so in this age; in this age truth is always with the minority; and so convinced am I of this, that if I find myself agreeing with the majority I make haste and get over to the other side, for I know I am wrong."

Many will follow the comfortable tradition of the majority regardless of how corrupt it becomes. They are afraid to stand for truth. Even if they see it, they choose rather to corrupt the doctrine of the Bible:

Matthew 15:3-9

But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

On the other hand, God has many that have not bowed the knee to erroneous, cowardly tradition. Many have taught that a believer is saved by grace through faith alone and can never lose salvation; yet they also boldly preached the fact that disobedient believers can be punished at the Judgment Seat and be excluded from the millennial kingdom. Even so, no Christian can rest upon the merits of others. Each individual Christian is called to study, believe and practice the truths that God has revealed in His Word:

Romans 14:12

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

A General Truth To Be Considered In All Interpretations of Bible Verses

1 Corinthians 4:5

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

The above promise in 1Cor. 4:5 is certainly not absolute. "Every man", in an absolute sense, would mean that even the unbelievers would be praised at the Judgment Seat! This is obviously the wrong interpretation since not even every *Christian* will be praised at the Judgment Seat (Matt. 25:26, 2 Cor. 5:9-11, 1 John 2:28, 1Cor. 3:15, etc.). The comforting promise in this Scripture must be interpreted in a relative sense in order to harmonize with the rest of Scripture; and this is also true of many other Scriptures.

Are we called to submit to every ordinance of man (1 Peter 2:13), absolutely, without exception? If so, Peter disobeyed his own teaching (Acts 5:29)! God expects us to read His whole Book (i.e. "every Word of God"), and notice the exceptions to general commands and promises.

The "we" in 1 Thessalonians 1:17 includes the apostle Paul and the Thessalonians to whom He is writing. Most Christian teachers are in agreement on this point. On the other hand, it is interesting that many scholars attempt to argue that the same kind of "we" in Heb. 10:26 does not actually include Paul himself or the saved Hebrews to whom he is writing! This is, of course, a reckless interpretation. Could this inconsistency be motivated by the fact that Heb. 10:26-29 is a promise of future judgment and 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is a promise of future blessing?

Heb. 10:26-29 teaches that if Paul or the Hebrew Christians sin willfully, they will receive future judgment. There is no Biblical reason to not apply this warning to all Christians at all times. Yet, we know that everyone, in some degree, sins willfully after salvation (1 John 1:8, 9). Is it therefore absolutely true that every Christian will die at the Judgment Seat? No! Some saints will obey the admonitions and teachings of the previous verses and chapters in Hebrews, which shed further light on the warning. These Christians will quickly flee to the throne of grace and seek mercy. Just a few verses before the warning is given in Heb. 10:26-29, we have the command to seek mercy and avoid this sore punishment:

Hebrews 10:21-22

And having an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Since Paul includes himself in this exhortation, it is therefore a command to believers. Christians avoid temporary death at the Judgment Seat (for sins committed after salvation) by seeking mercy in faith and abstaining from sin in the first place. The promises and exhortations to seek mercy and grace (for sins in the Christian walk) are provided in the previous chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 4:16, 7:25, 8:1, 9:14, 24). The Judgment Seat will be too late to repent and seek such mercy (Heb. 12: 16-17).

Therefore, in interpreting the "we" in Heb. 10:26-29, we must factor in the previous information given in the Epistle. It is the same with the "we" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Paul and the saved Hebrews (i.e. the "we") will certainly die at the Judgment Seat if they fail to repent and seek mercy in time. Likewise, Paul and the Thessalonians (i.e. the "we") will be with Jesus forever at His coming (without being a temporary castaway) if they continue to fulfill the conditions already provided in the previous teachings of the apostle (1 Thess. 4:6), in the Epistles to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:12, 3:5, 13, 4:6, 5:23), and in the rest of Scripture (Matt. 24:48-51, 25:30, Luke 12:43-48, 1Cor. 6:8-10, 9:27, 2 Cor. 5:9-11, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:5-8, etc.).

As already noted, there are many statements in the Bible that are general or potentially true, - yet not absolute or without conditions or qualifications (see 1 Kings 2:20, 23, 20:42, Jonah 3:2, 4, 10, etc.):

Hebrews 9:27

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

The above verse is only true in general. Many will be translated and will totally escape death - like Enoch (Heb. 11:5). And some people in the Bible died more than once (Acts 9:40, etc.). The phrase "so shall we ever be with the Lord" must likewise be interpreted in the light of its immediate context and implied conditions (stated elsewhere). What kind of Christians were the Thessalonians? Were they enduring persecution faithfully? Were they hoping for the kingdom? Were they walking in love? If so, they could certainly have confidence and hope of kingdom reign and Paul could honestly comfort them with the promise that they will appear with Jesus in glory during the millennium. Notice the faithfulness of the Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 1:2-8

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father 7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia 8 For from you sounded out the

word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

The Thessalonians were very holy. That is why Paul could comfort them with the hope of being with Christ forever at His appearing. They were also faithfully suffering for Christ. Those that suffer will surely reign (2 Tim. 2:12):

2 Thessalonians 1:5

Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

1 Thessalonians 2:14

For ye, brethren, became followers of the Churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

For this cause, Paul could rejoice. He was not afraid for them (Gal. 4:11). He had great expectation that they would remain in the presence of Christ and inherit the kingdom:

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? 20 For ye are our glory and joy.

It was not simply because the Thessalonians were saved that Paul could have this great hope and joy. It was because they were suffering faithfully for the kingdom. Paul was anxious to find out how they were responding to their afflictions. When he heard the good news of their faithfulness, he rejoiced and was comforted:

1 Thessalonians 3:4-7

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. 5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. 6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: 7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

Nevertheless, Paul even warns the holy Thessalonians. Before he gives them the comforting words of 1Thess. 4:17, he warns them that such a promise of "ever" being with the Lord (before the millennium) is not unconditional. If they do not continue in holiness, they are in danger at the second coming of Christ:

1 Thessalonians 4:3-6

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; 5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: 6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

This warning reveals that the "so shall we ever be with the Lord" is not unconditional. It was made because the Thessalonians were fulfilling the conditions:

1 Thessalonians 4:9-13

But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; 11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing. 13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

It is probable that the ones who had fallen asleep were martyred for their faith in Christ. They would certainly have the "hope" of reigning with Christ! The rest who were alive and remaining could also have great hope since they were walking in the Spirit.

The promise in 1 Thess. 4:17 is similar to the promise God made to the Israelites concerning the land of Canaan:

Exodus 6:6-8

Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: 7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians 8 And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.

Exodus 12:25

And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

There are no conditions revealed in these positive statements to Israel. The Israelites could have comforted one another with such words. The words "ye shall keep this service" are similar to "so shall we ever be with the Lord." Nevertheless, the majority of those Israelites who had been "given" the land and the promise never made it over (Num. 14:23)! Paul continually reminds Christians of these things (1Cor. 10:11-12, Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4).

The promise in 1 Thess. 4:17 is also very similar to the New Testament promises concerning prayer. There are many verses that do not reveal in themselves that outward obedience is a condition for answered prayer. We are called to factor in the conditions that are revealed in other Scriptures. Notice the following promises:

Matthew 7:7-8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Matthew 18:19

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 21:22

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Mark 11:23-24

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

John 14:13-14

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

The conditions in the following Scriptures must be added to these promises:

John 15:7

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

James 4:3

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

1 Peter 3:12

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

1 John 3:22

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

1 John 5:14-15

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Therefore, the "we" that is "with the Lord" in the future millennial kingdom is a "we" that is properly fulfilling all the stated conditions through Christ's power.

In light of this answer, how are we to know that the promise of eternal salvation through faith alone (apart from works) is not also conditional? One way we know this precious promise is without conditions is through examining other Scriptures that reveal that Christians who possessed no fruit in their lives, will

ultimately experience eternal salvation alter the millennium (1Cor. 3:15, Rev. 10:13-15, Matt. 18:34-35, John 6:39-40, etc.).

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Hope of Salvation

1 Thessalonians 5:8-9

But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you have had a gnawing feeling in your stomach (the Bible calls this a feeling in the "heart") now that you have begun to digest the doctrine that has been presented in this book. Perhaps the Holy Spirit has convicted you it is likely that you have not even *entered* the race, much less have you qualified for the *prize*. Take heart, my brothers and sisters – God has not appointed you to wrath. This wrath is not His desire for you. His desire is that you should obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is never too late! Consider the following two parables.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. 29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make

merry with my friends: 30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Instead of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, I have always preferred to call this the Parable of the Father's Heart. For this is indeed the heart of our Father in heaven. This parable is usually taught to show the joy of the Father "over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10) and is born-again, and I won't argue this is not a valid application. However, let us see that it can also apply to the Salvation of the Soul.

To begin with, "A certain man had two sons" – Obviously, the Father in this parable is God. But consider this: the sinner has no father-son relationship with God. Jesus clearly stated this:

John 8:42-44

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of your father the devil,

"Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." – Here the son is asking for the "inheritance" (which those with a saved soul will receive in heaven) now, on earth. He wishes to "save his life" now, in this life; perhaps he does not realize the consequence that he will "lose his life" in the next age. God will not *always* deny His children success in this world. Look around you, and consider the wealthy in your own Church who you have no reason to doubt are born again. To be wealthy is not a sin; the sin comes when the wealth keeps you from needing anything, and you drift away from God. The sin comes when you attempt to "serve God and Mammon." Jesus only said it is very difficult ("*shall hardly*") for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. Most of us could not handle great wealth. But the Prodigal Son preferred to "save his life" here on earth, and he "*wasted his substance with riotous living*". Here is a picture of a Christian who chooses to "save his life" here on earth, and is at risk of "losing his life" at the Judgment Seat.

"And took his journey into a far country" – Here the son left off following God, and "*joined himself to a citizen of that country*". The "country" represents the world system; the son was not a citizen of the world, but rather was a citizen of the "kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. 1:13). The son is enamored of the things the world has to offer; he has forgotten the admonition to "*love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*" (1 John 2:15).

Hebrews 11:15-16

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Here we see the son has realized the folly of his riotous living, and of following after the world, and he "*came to himself*". He then repented before the Father. (*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [1John 1:9]*). Then we see the Father's heart after the Christian repents: "*It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found*". The son had been lost, and had

wandered into the broad way "that leadeth to destruction"; on the "way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Pro 16:25)"

In this parable, God shows us that He is "*longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* (2Peter 3:9)." This verse is often used to show that God is not willing that any of the *unsaved* should perish, but one should make special note that He is "*longsuffering to us-ward*". This particular verse is addressed to Christians. Thus we see God's heart; He longs that a worldly believer should repent, that we should not perish (suffer loss) at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Parable of the Laborers

Matthew 20:1-16

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. 9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. 11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, 12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. 13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? 14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? 16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

"*So when even was come...Call the labourers, and give them their hire..*" Here we see the Lord Jesus Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The laborers have been doing their good works for the love of the Lord, but also legitimately in anticipation of rewards. The reward here is not salvation of the spirit, for no man can labor for that; it is a free gift. Rather, the reward in view here that each man has labored for is the "*prize (reward) of the high calling of God*" that each believer who presents a saved soul at the Judgment Seat will receive. And that is the inheritance, the out-resurrection, the "resurrection from the dead" that Paul applied his all (labored) that "*if by any means*" he "*might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*" (Phil. 3:11). There are no believers with unsaved souls in this parable; they are all equally laborers in the vineyard. The only difference is the *number of hours* they labored. They all received the same reward – a penny.

So here is the good news: What the Lord is showing us in this parable is that, at least as concerns this particular reward, it is not only a matter of how *long* we were on the narrow way - on the road to Salvation of the Soul - but the fact that we were finally actually *on* this road. What matters is that after

finding this way, we were faithful to stay on this road (or in the vineyard) "till even was come", or until the end of the race – either death or the rapture. What matters was that we endure to the end, as the Scripture gives us this principle:

Matthew 24:13

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

I would urge all my brethren, if you have received the message I have ardently striven to convey to you, if you are under conviction from the Holy Spirit that, "Yes, this is for me", you need only to "repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The good news is that God wants every believer to have part in the first resurrection and to rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ for one thousand years. I urge you not to neglect "so great a salvation".

The "high calling of God" is not beyond the reach of anyone whom the Lord has called. Here is what will keep you on the path of life – love the Lord Jesus with all your heart, and seek His glory alone. Everything that you do to exalt yourself will one day bring you the most terrible humiliation. Everything that you do out of true love for the Saviour, to glorify His name, will extend the limits of His eternal kingdom, and ultimately will result in a much higher place for yourself. Live for what is recorded in heaven; care nothing for what is recorded on earth. And keep always in sight God's will for you:

Luke 12:32

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

This is the true hope that belongs to every Christian - this I can say to each of you in the authority of the Word of God:

Matthew 4:17

Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

If you will do this, then,

2 Peter 1:11

...so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I pray you will heed His warnings.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

The Mysterious Bible Codes

Proverbs 25:2

2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.

Several years ago researchers in Israel discovered a staggering phenomenon of hidden codes within the Hebrew text of the Old Testament that reveal a remarkable knowledge about future events and personalities that cannot be explained unless God supernaturally inspired the writers to record His precise words. The material in this chapter is possibly the most intriguing evidence presented in this book that will point to the truth that the Scriptures are truly inspired by God.

During the last few years, millions of people have heard about this phenomenon known as the Bible Codes. However, there are many questions that must be answered. Is it possible that God has actually hidden a series of encoded words within the Hebrew text of the Bible that reveal His supernatural knowledge of historical and current events? But, is this phenomenon genuine? Are the claims about the Bible Codes true?

If this information is accurate, this Bible Codes phenomenon provides powerful new evidence that the Scriptures must truly be the inspired Word of God. However, if this discovery is false, it could easily cause great confusion to millions of interested people, as well as to the Church itself. Numerous articles about the Bible Codes have appeared in major newspapers and magazines throughout the world, including Time and Newsweek. Millions of people have read several best selling books that explore the Bible Code phenomenon.

Many radio and television shows have discussed this impressive discovery. When I first heard about the codes, I was naturally quite skeptical. However, after careful evaluation of the phenomenon, I believe that there is powerful evidence that the code is genuine. Additional research during the last six years has provided more evidence that God placed these codes in the Scriptures. They provide fascinating details about historical events that have come to pass thousands of years after the biblical text was written. The Bible Codes provide a new type of evidence that supplements the many other types of evidence that prove the Scriptures are supernatural. This discovery may provide a last measure of incontrovertible evidence to our skeptical generation that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

I trust that this in-depth study of the mysterious Bible Codes will help you to understand this phenomenon from a balanced Christian perspective. This chapter will explore many of the issues raised by this remarkable discovery as well as the numerous legitimate questions and criticisms that have been raised by atheistic, Jewish, and Christian critics who doubt that the Bible Code phenomenon is genuine. I understand the natural reluctance of those who have not spent time exploring this phenomenon to accept the reality of the codes without a detailed examination.

There is no question that the Bible Codes represent an astonishing new claim that demands a high level of validation before we should accept it. By nature I am a skeptic. When I first heard about this, I thought that the claims of the code researchers seemed unbelievable. That is why I am not offended in the slightest

when someone tells me that they cannot accept the Bible Codes as genuine. However, after much research, I am more convinced than ever that God placed the Bible Codes within the text of the Bible to prove to this skeptical generation through this remarkable new evidence that He inspired the human writers to record His revelation to humanity in the Word of God.

A group of mathematicians and computer researchers in both Israel and North America have discovered a series of intriguing Bible Codes about Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust, the Oklahoma City Bombing, the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin, the War in the Gulf, and much more. This chapter will reveal exactly how Israeli computer scientists recently rediscovered the Bible Codes, which were hidden within the Bible for over three thousand years. In addition, you will learn how Bible students around the world are discovering new codes for themselves, using sophisticated computer programs.

Some of the most fascinating Bible Code research for Christians involves the marvelous discovery by Yacov Rambsel of forty-one encoded words naming Jesus and His disciples, Mary, Joseph, Pilate, and many other people in the life of Christ including King Herod and the High Priest Caiaphas. These names were found encoded in the well known "suffering Messiah" prophecy of Isaiah 53, which predicted the trial, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus Christ more than seven centuries before He was born. This will be explored in detail later in this chapter.

Many readers will be intrigued by the discovery of remarkable 9/ 11 Bible Codes that name Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, the World Trade Center, New York, as well as numerous additional names connected to the tragic Islamic terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, which are fully explored in this chapter. This chapter will answer your questions about the nature and validity of the Bible Codes and the fascinating scientific evidence that proves the Bible is truly the inspired Word of God. In addition, I will attempt to provide comprehensive answers to the legitimate questions and objections to the Bible Codes raised over the last few years by atheists, Christians, and Jews. It does not surprise me that most people are initially quite skeptical about the codes.

It was vital that I be absolutely convinced of the reliability of this information and that these ELS codes would provide credible evidence supporting the supernatural origin of the Bible. In my opinion, the discovery of the Yeshua Codes about Jesus Christ in the Hebrew Bible provided God's "seal of approval" on this remarkable phenomenon. The new codes revealed Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah and acknowledge that He came in the flesh. The codes identifying Jesus as the Son of God provide compelling evidence that God placed these hidden codes within the Bible to be widely shared with this modern generation of skeptics.

The Bible has been studied extensively by hundreds of millions of Jews and Christians over the last thirty-five hundred years. Therefore, some readers have naturally asked how anyone in our generation could possibly discover something new that was not previously known. This is a legitimate question. However, many new archeological, scientific and medical discoveries during the last one hundred and fifty years have provided convincing new evidence regarding the reliability of the ancient biblical text.

Dr. William Albright, the greatest Christian archeologist of the past century, spent his life exploring the land of Israel and the surrounding nations in his search for archeological artifacts. As a result of his and other archeologists' numerous discoveries, Dr. Albright concluded that the Bible was totally accurate in every area where he had examined the archeological evidence. When he summarized the final results of the thousands of archeological discoveries made during the last century, Dr. Albright concluded: "There can be no doubt that archeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition."

With powerful apologetic evidence, Christians can challenge the skeptics in our generation to seriously consider the claims of the Bible that it is the supernatural Word of God. The Lord commands Christians, in the words of 1 Peter, to be prepared to explain and defend the reasonableness of our faith in the Bible and in Jesus Christ. We need to be prepared to persuade men and women to turn from their unbelief to seriously consider the claims of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:15

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

In light of God's command to defend our faith to our generation of unbelievers, I find it natural that we should from time to time discover new types of evidence in both the text of the Scriptures as well as in the world of science and archeology. I found an interesting quotation from the Christian writer, Joseph Butler, in his *The Analogy of Religion* that illustrates this point. "Nor is it at all incredible that a book which has been so long in the possession of mankind should contain many truths as yet undiscovered."

The Original Discovery of the Bible Codes

Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandl was a brilliant Czechoslovakian Jewish scholar in astronomy, mathematics, and Judaic studies. In the years before World War I, he found an obscure but intriguing reference to the Bible Codes in a rare book written by a fourteenth-century rabbi known as Rabbeynu Bachayah. The book described a curious pattern of letters encoded within the Torah by skipping an equal number of letters. This discovery inspired Rabbi Weissmandl to begin exploring to see if he could detect other examples of similar codes hidden within the Torah. During the following years, Weissmandl found that he could locate certain meaningful and related words or phrases, such as "hammer" and "anvil" if he examined the letters at sequences that were equally spaced in the Hebrew text. In other words, if he found the first letter of a significant word such as "Torah," and then, by skipping forward seven letters he found the second letter, he would continue to skip forward the same number of letters to see whether or not the complete word "Torah" was spelled out in the text at equally spaced intervals. Rabbi Weissmandl described this unusual phenomenon as "equidistant letter dequences" (ELS).

Weissmandl was amazed to find that numerous examples of significant words were hidden within the Hebrew text of the Torah at equally spaced intervals. These spaced intervals between significant letters varied from every two letters, every seven letters, and numerous other intervals. However, once they found a particular word spelled out at, say every twenty-second letter, the balance of the letters in the encoded words in this group were often spaced at an interval of every twenty-second letter.

Initially, Rabbi Weissmandl could not be certain if this phenomenon was truly significant or whether it was simply due to the great number of possible combinations of words and phrases that could occur by random chance by skipping forward various intervals of letters in the Hebrew text. The proof that this phenomenon was evidence of a supernatural intelligence and design was confirmed almost forty years later in Israel. The invention of sophisticated computers and statistical analysis was finally able to analyze the text of the Bible to prove that these codes could not have been produced by random chance.

Although Rabbi Weissmandl found many coded names by simply manually counting the letters in the text, he did not record his discoveries in writing. Fortunately, some of his students did record several examples of his code discoveries. Over the following decades, students in Israel who had heard about his

research began searching the Torah for themselves to ascertain whether or not such codes actually existed. Their discoveries ultimately resulted in the research studies at Hebrew University that have proven the validity of this research. The introduction of high-speed computers allowed Jewish scholars at Hebrew University to explore the text of the Torah in ways that previous generations could only dream about.

Equidistant Letter Sequences

A group of dedicated Jewish scholars in Israel, following up on Rabbi Weissmandl's research, found many additional hidden codes embedded within the text of the Torah. A paper called "Equidistant Letter Sequences in the Book of Genesis" was published in August 1994 in the scholarly journal Statistical Science. This academic publication is one of the most prominent mathematical and scientific journals in the world. The study was completed by three eminent Israeli mathematicians Doron Witztum, Yoav Rosenberg, and Eliyahu Rips at the world-renowned Hebrew University and the Jerusalem College of Technology. This study has been republished in several other respected scholarly journals, including Bible Review, October 1995, as well as on the Internet. Their discoveries of complex Hebrew codes that reveal supernatural and prophetic knowledge about the future is causing tremendous consternation in the academic community because it challenges the long-held beliefs of liberal scholars who generally reject verbal inspiration of the Bible.

This scientific discovery of the ELS code phenomenon is earthshaking in its potential consequences because it reveals a *staggering* level of mathematical design and intelligence that could only have been produced by a supernatural mind. This discovery provides compelling mathematical proof that the Bible was inspired by God. The data demolishes the false claim by liberal scholars and skeptics that the Bible was written and edited by uninspired men and that it is full of errors and contradictions. Despite the fact that numerous scholars and scientists have attempted to challenge the validity of this Bible Code research, the evidence for the existence of this phenomenon has not been successfully refuted.

Every Jot and Tittle

Jesus Christ Himself affirmed that the actual letters composing the Scriptures were directly inspired by God and were preserved in their precise order throughout eternity.

Matthew 5:18

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

The English word jot is our translation of the Greek word iota, the Greek letter "i." This iota is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew letter yod, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The word tittle is the Greek word "*keriaia*", derived from the smallest Hebrew grammatical symbol. Jesus Christ stated that even the smallest of the letters and grammatical marks in the original text of the Bible were directly inspired by God.

This intriguing statement by Jesus about the Scriptures has been confirmed two thousand years later by means of an intricate analysis of the Hebrew text of the Bible by mathematicians and computer scientists in Israel. To their total surprise, these researchers discovered that every single letter of the Torah fits into a complicated tapestry of staggering mathematical precision. In this regard, we should remember the provocative words quoted above from Proverbs 25: 2, "*It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.*"

This phenomenon of the Bible Codes was placed within the text of the Word of God thousands of years ago; however, God has hidden it successfully until our generation. Many of these codes could not have been discovered by manual examination of the text. The invention of high-speed computers enabled the researchers to examine every possible combination occurring in any of hundreds of possible skip distances (from every second letter to every five hundredth letter, for example) throughout the millions of Hebrew letters in the Old Testament. However, once a meaningful ELS pattern has been detected by the Computer program, anyone can personally verify the existence of that particular Bible Code by manually counting out the Hebrew letters to verify that a particular ELS word is spelled out by skipping the appropriate number of letters.

How Do the Bible Codes Work?

The Bible Codes are meaningful Hebrew words spelled out in the biblical text by skipping an equal number of letters. The researchers called this equal skipping of letters "Equidistant Letter Sequence" (ELS). The hidden message is spelled out within the normal surface text by skipping an equal number of letters (say every seventh letter). For example, they discovered that the Hebrew word for Israel was spelled out in the opening passage of Genesis by skipping every seven letters and once again by skipping every fifty letters within a short passage of only five verses (Gen. 1:30-2:3.) It is interesting to note that these verses where we find "Israel" encoded are known as the *Kiddush* and are recited by Jews around the world every Sabbath.

The practice of hiding an encoded word within a surface text by skipping every skipping every tenth, forty-eighth, etc. letter has been used by spies for centuries to send secret messages. For example, an American spy working in a British fort during the Revolutionary War might have written an innocent sounding letter to his mother in which he wrote about his health, the weather, and such. However, the spy created a secret message by encoding his message using every twelfth letter. This requires the spy to carefully choose the words of his surface text to conceal his secret message. When his commander intercepted the letter, he would circle every twelfth letter he found and read the secret message, which might have been: "Four hundred soldiers and twenty-two cannons in fort."

The Central Intelligence Agency would use their computers to create a chemistry professor's treatise that they knew the Russian spies would steal and then distribute to Russian scientists at their secret labs. According to a pre-arranged code, a Russian lab worker who was secretly spying for the CIA would ignore everything else in the treatise, but he would look for the secret message by selecting every seventy-seventh letter to find out which documents he should photograph for the CIA.

Some Jewish rabbis have always known that there were some ELS patterns and words encoded in the Bible, which had been found in the past. Later in this chapter we will examine some of the historical quotes that reveal knowledge of this curious phenomenon long before the creation of computers that could demonstrate the remarkable code patterns running through the Hebrew text of the Bible. However, until the development of high-speed computers, it was impossible to systematically search the biblical text to see if any other coded words might be hidden within the Scriptures.

Almost twenty-five years ago, a group of Israeli researchers developed a computer search program and placed the Hebrew text of the Bible into the computer. Using the ancient Hebrew Textus Receptus (the "received text," the ancient Masoretic Hebrew text used by the King James translators) of the Torah,

Professors Doron Witztum, Eliyahu Rips, and Yoav Rosenberg began by placing the Hebrew text of the first five books of the Bible into their computers.

The mathematicians initially chose three hundred arbitrary Hebrew word pairs that were logically related in meaning, such as "hammer" and "anvil," or "man" and "woman." They asked the computer program to locate any such word pairs in close proximity within the text of Genesis. Once the computer found the first letter in Hebrew of "hammer," it would search for the second letter at various intervals or spaces between letters (say skipping every second, third, or seventeenth letters). If the program couldn't locate the second letter of the target word "hammer" following the first letter at a two-space interval, it would then search at a three-space interval, then a four-space interval, etc. Once it located the second letter at, say, the twelve-space interval, it would then look forward in the text for the third letter at the same twelve-space interval, and so on through the entire 78,064 Hebrew letters in Genesis. The computer also looked for encoded words by checking in reverse order.

After the program had examined the text for each of the three hundred word pairs, the researchers were astonished to realize that every single word pair had been located in Genesis in close proximity to each other word. As statisticians, they were naturally astounded because they knew it was humanly impossible to construct such an intricate and complicated pattern within a surface text, such as Genesis, which recorded the history of the Jewish people. After calculating the probabilities of this phenomenon occurring randomly by chance alone, they published their conclusions in 1988 as part of another scientist's paper in a highly respected British scientific journal, the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*. The odds against the three hundred word pairs occurring by chance in the text of Genesis were phenomenal. The bottom line is that if the phenomenal results reported by the Israeli scientists were genuine, only a supernatural intelligence far beyond our human capacity could have produced the extraordinarily intricate pattern of encoded words they discovered within the Hebrew text of the Bible.

The term "interval" or "skip distance" indicates the number of Hebrew letters that are skipped in the original biblical passage to spell out the encoded word in equally spaced intervals (ELS). If the interval number in brackets is positive (22), then the encoded word begins at the indicated passage and reads right to left (the same direction in which we read a Hebrew text), skipping the indicated number of Hebrew letters. However, if the interval number in brackets is preceded by a minus sign (– 13), the encoded word begins at the indicated passage and reads left to right, skipping the indicated number of Hebrew letters.

These ELS word pairs were found compacted together much more closely in the biblical text than random chance would suggest was probable. As they studied these curious patterns further, the scientists discovered that many of the ELS-encoded words related to events and personalities in human history that occurred from ancient times until today. These coded words are interlaced in intricate patterns at evenly spaced intervals in the text, reading both forward and backward. The scientists realized that these ELS-encoded letters formed words and associations of such complexity and design that it was impossible that the letter patterns could have occurred by random chance alone.

Their initial experiment was reported in their contribution to a 1988 paper entitled "Probability, Statistics and Theology" by the mathematician D. J. Bartholomew, which was published by the British Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. This article by Bartholomew included the paper on the ELS codes discovered by Doron Witztum, Eliyahu Rips, and Yoav Rosenberg that was read before the Royal Statistical Society on November nth, 1987.

The Word Torah Encoded in the Bible

When the researchers looked at the string of Hebrew letters beginning in Genesis 1: 1, they counted forward fifty letters from the first appearance of the letter , the first letter (tav) of the Hebrew word Torah and found the second letter in the word Torah. Skipping forward another fifty letters, they found the third letter of the word Torah, . The last skip forward of fifty letters revealed the fourth letter in the word Torah. The Hebrew word, Torah, the Law, was spelled out using every fiftieth letter of the text.

To their surprise, they found that in the first verse of Exodus, the second book in the Bible, the same word Torah, was once again spelled out at the same fifty-letter intervals beginning with the first appearance of the letter. However, when they examined the opening verses of Leviticus, the third book of the Bible, the ELS word Torah was not encoded. The word God was spelled out when they skipped forward every eighth letter from the first letter yod that appeared in the book.

When they examined the initial verses of Numbers and Deuteronomy, the fourth and fifth books of the Bible, the scientists again found that the word Torah was encoded. In the Book of Numbers, Torah was spelled out in reverse at a fifty-letter interval. However, in the Book of Deuteronomy, it appeared in reverse order at a forty-nine-letter interval beginning in the fifth verse of the book.

The mathematician Dr. Daniel Michelson calculated that the odds were more than three million to one against the word Torah being encoded four times by chance alone within the opening verses within the first five books of the Bible.

Bible students know that the number fifty is very significant in Scripture. For example, God commanded Israel to free their slaves, to cancel all debts, and to return family lands that had been pledged to a lender on the fiftieth Year of Jubilee. In addition, the Bible reveals that God presented Law itself, the Torah, to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai precisely fifty days after their miraculous Exodus from Egypt.

Eden Encoded in Genesis

Israeli Professor Eliyahu Rips discovered that the key word Eden was encoded repeatedly sixteen times within the relatively short Genesis 2: 4– 10 passage (only 379 Hebrew letters) dealing with the Garden of Eden. Professor Michelson calculated that while you would expect to find the ELS word Eden five times by random chance, the odds against finding sixteen Edens occurring in ELS codes by random chance in such a short passage were only one chance in ten thousand.

Another fascinating feature of this phenomenon was found by Dr. Doron Witztum in the Genesis 2 passage that deals with the Garden of Eden. Twenty-five different ELS Hebrew names of trees were found encoded within the text of this one chapter in Genesis that records God's creation of vegetation. The mathematicians calculated that the laws of probability suggest the odds against this occurring by chance alone are a hundred thousand to one.

Thousands of detailed and precise ELS patterns and codes such as these were discovered hidden in the Hebrew text of the ancient Scriptures. Mathematicians and statisticians, after exhaustive statistical analysis, concluded that this pattern of coded words could not have occurred by chance, nor could a human writer have purposely produced this complex phenomenon. Their conclusion was that only a divine intelligence could have directed Moses to record this precise Hebrew biblical text containing such complex codes thousands of years ago.

Other Codes Reveal God's Prophetic Foreknowledge

The researchers discovered that some of the words encoded in the text of the Torah concerned events and personalities that occurred thousands of years after Moses wrote the Torah. Naturally, many academics rejected out of hand the very possibility that this Bible Codes phenomenon could be real. However, despite many attempts to deny its validity and numerous false claims that you could find these same complex ELS patterns in other non-biblical texts, no one has successfully refuted the reported ELS data or the Bible Codes phenomenon. The critics have simply denied that the ELS codes are statistically meaningful or they have claimed you could find the same phenomenon in other non-biblical texts. In the following chapters we will address these arguments by the code critics and demonstrate that their arguments are not valid.

The Ancestors of King David Named Centuries Before They Were Born

One of the most interesting of the experiments examined the text of Genesis 38, which recorded the history of the great Jewish patriarch Judah and his relationship with his widowed daughter-in-law Tamar, who gave birth as a result of this illicit intercourse to two sons, Pharez and Zerah. The Book of Ruth tells us that King David, the greatest king of Israel, was descended from Pharez, the son of the patriarch Judah as follows: Pharez was the ancestor of Boaz, who married his kinsman Ruth, who gave birth to Obed (Oved), who was the father of Jesse (Yishai), who was the father of King David. Each of the five Hebrew names of the key ancestors of King David were found encoded at forty-nine-letter intervals, reading left to right, within this Genesis 38 text. Incredibly, these five names (Boaz, Ruth, Oved, Yishai, and David) were encoded at the same forty-nine-letter ELS interval in the precise chronological order they were born, as recorded in the Bible. According to Dr. Moshe Katz, the odds were calculated as only one chance in 800,000 that the five names of David's ancestors would occur in this particular passage and that they would be found in the exact, chronological order in which they lived.

They examined Genesis 28, Jacob's vision of the ladder to heaven, which he received at Mount Moriah, the "place of God." The key words Temple and Torah were encoded at twenty-six-letter intervals in a continuous sequence of nine Hebrew letters beginning with the letter in the word place (Genesis 28: 16). The occurrence of these two significant words Temple and Torah in sequence within a biblical passage declaring that "this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" is extraordinary. The researchers calculated the probability of these two key words occurring by random chance in that particular passage at about one chance in 17 billion.

Aaron, Israel's High Priest, Encoded in Leviticus

In another analysis, Israeli mathematician Dr. Eliyahu Rips searched an eleven-verse section of Leviticus chapter 1, which records God's laws of worship concerning the priesthood of the Kohanien, the "sons of Aaron," Israel's High Priest. They found the Hebrew name, Aaron, encoded twenty-five times in this one small section of Leviticus (716 Hebrew letters) instead of eight times, as the laws of probability would suggest. Statisticians calculated that the odds against Aaron occurring twenty-five times by chance in this small passage were approximately 400,000 to one.

The Feast of Hanukkah and the Hasmoneans

The wicked Syrian king Antiochus IV slaughtered tens of thousands of Jews who refused to worship him when he conquered Jerusalem. Antiochus IV stopped the Temple sacrifice in 168 B.C. He then defiled the altar by sacrificing a pig upon it, provoking a Jewish rebellion, led by a courageous old man named Mattathias and his five sons. This triggered a spectacular war of religious independence. The Jews, led by his son Judas Maccabaeus ("the Hammer"), defeated the Syrian army against impossible odds in 165 B.C. The Jews re-conquered the Temple site on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, exactly three years to the day after Antiochus IV had stopped the daily sacrifice.

The Jews cleansed the sacred Temple (1 Maccabees 4: 52– 54) and reinstituted Temple worship. The Jewish Talmud claims that a priest found a one-day supply of the sacred oil hidden in a wall of the Temple. When the oil was used to light the candelabra, it miraculously lasted for the full eight days of the celebration, until new sacred oil could be refined. The Feast of Dedication has been commemorated ever since by the annual eight-day Hanukkah celebration.

The Israeli researchers found the encoded ELS word Hanukkah, which refers to the festival (at a –261 interval) in Genesis 36: 24– 37. Incredibly, this was encoded near the ELS word Hasmoneans (– 524), the name of the family of great warriors led by Judas Maccabee who ruled Israel in the following century. The name Mattathias, who led the Jewish rebellion against Syria, was also encoded in Genesis 36: 33– 40 by skipping every sixty-two letters right to left. In addition, the name of the Jewish general Maccabee was found by Doron Witztum, encoded every second letter right to left in Genesis 36: 31– 32.

King Louis and the French Revolution

Another passage in Genesis reveals a remarkable cluster of encoded words about the French Revolution. The following words are included: Mapecha HaSarfait ("the French Revolution"), "Louis," the name of the French king, and the word Beit (house of) Bourbon, his royal dynasty. In the same grouping were the following words: Hamarseille (the Hebrew name of the French national anthem) and the word Bastillia (the Hebrew name of the infamous French prison for political prisoners that was stormed by revolutionaries). Interestingly, this ELS cluster dealing with the French Revolution appears in Genesis 39– 41, a passage which describes Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt. The Hebrew word for Bastillia is found encoded within the text in Genesis 39:20 that describes "the prison in which the king keeps his prisoners."

They discovered the ELS word Zedekiah, who was the last king of Judah when the Babylonian army conquered Jerusalem in 587 B.C. intriguingly, the encoded name Matanya appeared in close proximity within the text. This was the original birth name of King Zedekiah before he ascended the throne (2 Kings 24:17).

The Assassination of Anwar Sadat

Possibly the most fascinating of the codes are those that reveal events that have occurred in our generation. The late Egyptian president Anwar Sadat courageously flew to Israel to meet with the Israeli leaders in an attempt to break the circle of continuous warfare between Egypt and Israel. Tragically, President Sadat was assassinated during a military parade on October 6, 1981, by Islamic fundamentalists from the Moslem Brotherhood who remain bitterly opposed to the peace process. The Israeli researchers found the encoded names Anwar and Sadat together with Chaled Islambooli, the leader of the Moslem Brotherhood assassination team, encoded in Genesis 18. The assassin's name, Chaled, appears in ELS

code at an interval of six letters, right to left, in Genesis 18:4 beginning with the second letter of the eighth word in that verse. The same code sequence also contained the date 8 Tishri (October 6) and the year of his assassination, 1981, together with these encoded words: president, gunfire, shot, murder, and parade.

Hitler and the Holocaust Bible Codes

One of the most curious of all the hidden ELS codes is the discovery of the words Hitler, Nazis, and the names of several of the Holocaust death camps embedded within the text of Deuteronomy. The Israeli researchers naturally wondered if the Bible Codes might reveal anything about the Holocaust, the greatest tragedy in the history of the Jewish people. When they asked the program to search for the target words Hitler, Nazis, and Holocaust, the computer found that every one of these target words was encoded in a cluster of codes within a small passage in Deuteronomy 10:17-22:

Deuteronomy 10:17-22

17 For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: 18 He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. 19 Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. 20 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. 21 He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen .22 Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

They found the word Hitler, spelled out at a twenty-two-letter interval. Several of the names of concentration death camps were found embedded within this same text, beginning with the second to last appearance of the Hebrew letter bet, , in this passage. Counting every thirteenth letter from left to right the coded letters spelled the phrase "*b'yam mar ah Auschwitz*", which means "in the bitter sea of Auschwitz." As they skipped forward another thirteen letters, they came to the letter "resh". From the resh they counted every twenty-second letter from left to right and connected to the word *Hitler*.

Hitler's Nazis ultimately slaughtered over six million Jews and another six million Poles and Russians in the death camps in Eastern Europe. The names of two of the Nazi concentration camps, *Auschwitz* and *Belsen*, were found in a cluster of encoded ELS words: *Germany, Poland, genocide, plaques, crematoria, an evil house, fuhrer, and Mein Kampf*.

Deuteronomy 33:16 also contained a hidden code about the Nazi Holocaust. Beginning with the first Hebrew letter "mem", they counted every 246th letter from left to right and found the encoded word *melek Natzim*, which means "king of the Nazis." This same passage contained the phrase *kemi bait rah*", "an evil house rose up". In Deuteronomy 32:52, beginning with the letter aleph and counting from left to right every 670 letters spells the name "*Aik'man*", a Hebrew variant of the name *Eichmann*. Adolf Eichmann was the Nazi official who designed the Final Solution, the system of concentration death camps used in the Holocaust. He was finally captured after the war in Argentina, abducted to Israel, tried, and executed as a mass murderer.

The series of hidden codes dealing with Nazi Germany and the Holocaust concluded in Deuteronomy 33: 21 with a final significant code. Beginning with the letter resh, , that appeared in the word Yisrael,

researchers counted every twenty-second letter from left to right and found the tragic phrase "*re'tzach alm*", which means "a people cry murder, slaughter."

Many Jews have asked why the prophecies of the Bible say nothing about the Holocaust, the worst tragedy in the history of God's Chosen People. The discovery of the Bible Codes provides evidence that God encoded prophetic words about the Holocaust within the text of the Bible.

Hitler, the Nazis, and the Death Camps Were Prophesied in the Bible

Encoded ELS Word Hebrew Interval Begins at:

Hitler (22) Deut. 10: 17
Auschwitz (– 13) Deut. 10: 21
Holocaust (13) Deut. 10: 20
Germany (– 933) Deut. 33: 28
Crematorium for my sons (134) Deut. 31: 28
The Holocaust (50) Deut. 31: 16
Plagues (– 134) Deut. 32: 32
Eichmann (9670) Deut. 32: 52
Auschwitz (– 536) Deut. 33: 24
In Poland (– 107) Deut. 32: 22
King of the Nazis (– 246) Deut. 33: 16
Genocide (– 22) Deut. 33: 21
The Fuhrer (5)' Deut. 32: 50
Hitler (– 3) Num. 19: 13
Mein Kampf (9832) Num. 22: 1

Mathematicians Confirm Their ELS Findings

In 1994 the Israeli scientists wrote a follow-up paper on their word-pair ELS experiment using the 66 Famous Rabbis (discussed later in this chapter) for submission to *Statistical Science*, a scientific journal that insisted that a group of opposing scholars review and challenge their data and examine their computer program before publication. Despite the fact that all of the reviewers held previous beliefs against the inspiration of the Scriptures, the overwhelming evidence and the integrity of the data forced the editors to approve the study's scientific accuracy and reluctantly publish the article. Robert Kass, the editor of *Statistical Science*, wrote this comment about the study that was published in August 1994: "Our referees were baffled: their prior beliefs made them think the Book of Genesis could not possibly contain meaningful references to modern day individuals, yet when the authors carried out additional analysis and checks the effect persisted. The paper is thus offered to *Statistical Science* readers as a challenging puzzle."

The study concluded that the peculiar sequences of Hebrew letters appearing in the biblical text at equal spaces from each other forming significant words could not possibly have occurred by simple coincidence or random chance.

The Response from Recognized Experts

I realize that this information about the Bible Code phenomenon will sound almost unbelievable to many readers. However, the well-respected mathematician Professor David Kazhdan, chairman of the Department of Mathematics at Harvard University, and fellow scientists from other universities including Yale and Hebrew University in Jerusalem confirmed that this is "serious research carried out by serious investigators." These recognized experts in mathematics wrote a letter confirming the value of this research in the introduction to a recent Israeli book about this phenomenon called "*May mad HaNosaf*" (The Added Dimension), written by Professor Doron Witztum of the Jerusalem College of Technology. Dr. David Kazhdan made the following statement during an interview with a newspaper in 1996: "The phenomenon is real; what it means is up to the individual."

Professor Witztum is the leading researcher on these Bible Codes. Realizing that this discovery is extremely controversial in today's academic world, these scientists encouraged additional research on the phenomenon and declared that "the results are sufficiently striking to deserve a wide audience." In light of their known attitude of rejection of the Bible's divine inspiration and the supernatural, their statement is a powerful endorsement that the phenomenon is legitimate and is worthy of continued study.

Scientists who have studied these results state that it would be extremely difficult to create such a Hebrew document containing hundreds of encoded ELS words. They concluded that it would be virtually impossible to reproduce this phenomenon in a Hebrew text, even if they had the help of a group of brilliant linguists or the assistance of the world's most sophisticated supercomputers. In addition, it is impossible to account for the prophetic knowledge regarding future personalities and events found in these codes. The evidence suggests that God inspired Moses to record the precise Hebrew words including the ELS spelled codes in the words of the Torah.

In addition to demonstrating that God inspired the text of the Torah, the evidence of this marvelous design destroys the Documentary Hypothesis, the theory of liberal skeptics that several different "editors" interwove different texts centuries after the death of Moses creating the Book of Genesis. The fact that researchers have found a number of very long ELS patterns extending throughout the first five books of the Bible suggests that only one supernatural mind could have imposed this marvelously complex design upon the Torah. The researchers have since discovered similar codes throughout the whole Old Testament.

The Famous Jewish Sages Experiment

In a 1994 follow-up paper published in the Statistical Science journal, the Israeli team of researchers recorded the results of their search for pairs of encoded words that relate to people and events that occurred thousands of years after Moses wrote the Torah. They selected the names of thirty-four of the most prominent rabbis and Jewish sages during the thousand years leading up to A.D. 1,900. Interestingly, the researchers simply selected the thirty-four Jewish sages with the longest biographies in the Encyclopedia of History of the Great Men in Israel.

They asked the computer program to search the text of the Torah for close word pairs coded at equally spaced intervals that contained both the names of the famous rabbis paired with their date of birth or death, using the Hebrew month and day. (The Jewish people celebrate the memory of their famous sages by commemorating their date of death.) Incredibly, the computer program found every single one of the

thirty-four names of these famous rabbis embedded in the text of Genesis paired at significantly close proximity with the actual dates of their birth or death.

Scholars at the *Statistical Science* journal who reviewed this experimental data were naturally amazed. They demanded that the scientists run the computer test program again on a second sample searching for the next thirty-two most prominent Jewish sages listed in a major Jewish encyclopedia. To the astonishment of the skeptical reviewers, the results on the second set of famous sages were equally successful. The staggering result of the combined test revealed that the names and dates of their birth or death of every one of the sixty-six most famous Jewish sages from A.D. 1,000 to 1,900 were encoded in close proximity within the text of Genesis. The odds against these particular rabbis' names and dates occurring in close proximity by random chance were calculated by the mathematicians as only one chance in 62,500.

In the *Statistical Journal* article in August 1994 Robert Kass made the following statement: "It has been noted that when the book of Genesis is written as two-dimensional arrays, equidistant letter sequences spelling words with related meanings often appear in close proximity. Quantitative tools for measuring this phenomenon are developed. Randomization analysis shows that the effect is significant at the level of 0.00002 [one chance in 50,000]."

Naturally, the researchers attempted to reproduce these results by running the computer program on other religious Hebrew texts outside the Bible. The researchers could not detect significant ELS codes beyond what you would normally find by random chance in any other Hebrew text outside the Bible.

When you carefully consider the ELS phenomenon, you can see that even a minor change of spelling or choice of words would destroy the precise sequence of Hebrew letters that reveals these hidden words encoded at evenly spaced distances throughout a particular text of the Torah. A critic insisted they attempt to find similar complex ELS codes in a Hebrew translation of Tolstoy's famous novel *War and Peace* because it was the same length as the Book of Genesis. However, the phenomenon was not present in *War and Peace*, or any other modern Hebrew writing. In fact, an exhaustive analysis reveals that no other Hebrew text outside the Old Testament contains these mysterious codes, not even the Hebrew apocryphal books written during the four hundred years before the birth of Christ. Following the 1994 appearance of the article on the Bible Codes in *Bible Review*, there was a virtual onslaught of letters to the editor in the following monthly issues attacking the article in the strongest terms. Most of the critical letters dismissed the phenomenon without seriously considering the scientific data that was presented. Several critics attacked the author's argument and data in ways that revealed they either failed to grasp the actual statistical method used to detect and analyze the Hebrew codes or they didn't understand the rigorous methodology that eliminated the possibility that this phenomenon had occurred by pure random chance.

After his research was published in *Bible Review* in November 1995, Dr. Jeffrey Satinover responded to the critics who had challenged his assertion that a pattern of elaborate and significant words was encoded within the Torah. Dr. Satinover replied to his critics as follows:

"The robustness of the Torah codes findings derives from the rigor of the research. To be published in a journal such as *Statistical Science*, it had to run, without stumbling, an unusually long gauntlet manned by some of the world's most eminent statisticians. The results were thus triply unusual: in the extraordinariness of what was found; in the strict scrutiny the findings had to hold up under; and in the unusually small odds (less than 1 in 62,500) that they were due to chance."

Other amazing claims about the Bible, Shakespeare, etc., have never even remotely approached this kind of rigor, and have therefore never come at all close to publication in a peer-reviewed, hard-science venue. The editor of *Statistical Science*, himself a skeptic, has challenged readers to find a flaw: though many have tried, none has succeeded. All the 'First Crack' questions asked by Bible Review readers— and many more sophisticated ones— have therefore already been asked by professional critics and exhaustively answered by the Israeli researchers. Complete and convincing responses to even these initial criticisms can get fairly technical.

Some critics have suggested that the Israeli scientists simply played with the computer program long enough, that by chance alone "they got lucky." This objection raises the relevant objection that there might be numerous unreported "hidden failures," a common problem in most scientific research today. To prevent this from occurring, editorial observers from the *Statistical Journal* demanded that the Israeli scientists analyze their data by examining a completely new group of personalities that were chosen solely by the *Statistical Journal's* editorial judges, namely the sixty-six most famous Jewish sages. The results I quoted earlier in this chapter were based on this group of individuals chosen by these judges. In addition, the judges appointed by the *Statistical Journal* analyzed the computer programs to determine that they were both valid and neutral in their design.

We need to keep in mind that the standard text of the five books of the Torah was electronically published years ago in widely available computer programs and printed texts. These texts cannot be modified. In fact, as a result of the production and sale of numerous "Bible Code" computer programs that are now available in North America, anyone with a computer and lots of time can personally verify the existence of these codes within the Hebrew text of the Scriptures. I have personally verified the presence of these fascinating patterns of hidden codes during long hours of examination using the computer programs I acquired several years ago in Jerusalem when this research was just beginning.

Professor Harold Gans, a senior researcher who examined sophisticated foreign government intelligence codes for the U.S. Army, has publicly confirmed the existence of these codes as reported in *Statistical Journal* through the use of advanced analytic techniques and his own sophisticated computer program. Dr. Gans is a brilliant mathematician who has published 180 technical papers. When Gans learned of this discovery by Professor Doron Witztum, as a skeptic and a non-religious Jew, he initially thought that the claims were "ridiculous." Unlike many readers, as an intelligence specialist dealing with complex codes and computers, Gans had the technical ability to test the claims and data for himself. In 1989, he created a complex and original computer program on his computer to check Witztum's data. For nineteen straight days and nights, Gans let his program examine all possible variations and combinations in the 78,064 Hebrew letters in the Book of Genesis. Dr. Gans's computer program checked through hundreds of thousands of possible letter combinations at many different spaced intervals. Finally, Gans was forced to conclude that these codes actually existed and that they could not have occurred by random chance or human design. He had confirmed the absolute accuracy of Professor Witztum's conclusions. As a result of his discoveries, Professor Gans now teaches classes in synagogues throughout the world about the extraordinary evidence proving divine authorship of the Bible.

Dr. Gans's follow-up study found that the text of Genesis also revealed the encoded names of the actual cities where each of these sixty-six sages was born. Gans calculated that the odds against this occurring by chance was one chance in two hundred thousand as recorded in his paper "Coincidence of Equidistant Letter Sequenced Pairs in the Book of Genesis."

Many scientists from other universities and laboratories are now conducting careful investigations that examine the remarkable nature of the phenomenon. After seven years, the critics of the codes finally published an article in Statistical Science that attempts to critique the original experiment by the Israeli scientists concerning the methodology used in the experiment concerning the sixty-six great Jewish sages that was first published in 1994 in Statistical Science.

Are the Bible Codes Meaningful or Are They Accidental?

Regardless of the relative merits of the statistical analysis of the presence of the sixty-six rabbis and their dates of death as well as birth cities, the basic phenomenon of the Bible Codes exists as anyone in possession of a Hebrew Bible can confirm. The question that always remains to be answered: Does this phenomenon provide evidence that it was placed there by some supernatural design, or is the presence of these numerous codes regarding future events and people simply the result of random chance? The decision is ultimately a value judgment that each person must make for himself. The mathematician will examine his calculations of statistical probability to determine his answer. The average reader will arrive at his or her own logical and common sense conclusion based on their assessment of the probability or improbability that the ancient Hebrew text of the Bible could contain these ELS patterns naming all of these people, places, and events by random chance as opposed to the supernatural design of God. The decision is yours.

The 9/ 11 Terrorist Attack Bible Codes

When the tragic, horrific Islamic terrorist attacks took place on September 11, 2001 millions of people throughout the civilized world were stunned to witness such appalling hatred, evil, and the sudden death of over three thousand innocent lives. As people everywhere attempted to process the devastating news that America had been attacked without warning, naturally those students of the Word of God who study the Bible Codes were motivated to begin a rigorous computer search of the Bible to determine if there were any ELS codes that related to this terrible event.

Researchers at Bible Code Digest have developed an excellent Web site that seriously examines and explores the existence and significance of the ELS code phenomenon. Dave Swaney of Bible Code Digest is responsible for the excellent research completed by his team of code researchers regarding these ELS code discoveries related to the World Trade Center terrorist attack. I encourage anyone who is interested in exploring the Bible Code phenomenon in more detail to examine their fascinating web site: www.biblecodedigest.com. The following code discoveries relating to the tragic 9/11 terror attack were discovered and reported on their Web site. A statistical analysis of the probabilities of these particular ELS codes occurring in any Hebrew text can be examined in the pages of their site.

In the days following September 11, their team found numerous ELS codes in a very significant passage of the Old Testament - Ezekiel 37, the prophetic passage where Ezekiel saw a vision of "the valley of dry bones" that represented the exiled nation of Israel being reborn in the last days in response to the command of God. Virtually all of the Islamic terrorist proclamations identify America's support for the existence and security of the State of Israel as one of the major reasons they have dedicated themselves to the destruction of the United States of America, the "Great Satan" in their propaganda pronouncements. It is fascinating that this remarkable cluster of significant ELS encoded words related to the 9/ 11 terrorist attack should be found within this vital prophecy about the rebirth of Israel as a nation in our generation after almost two thousand years of exile.

After a great deal of research, the Bible Code Digest team found the following words that were grouped around the prophecy of Ezekiel 37. While many of these ELS codes have large skip distances, the fact that they cross over each other in close proximity within this key prophecy is quite significant. Where two numbers are given in the ELS skip distance column, that word is encoded twice in this prophecy. Further details are available for your analysis at www.biblecodedigest.com.

Bible Codes About the September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attack

ELS Encoded Word	ELS Skip Distance
Manhattan	698
World Trade Center	78
Tower Destroyed Toward the Mountain, Oh God	904
Pentagon	65626 Hijackers 29
Ignite the Airliner	267
Terror Hot in me	430
Where are They?	37
And let God not strike Terror	37
Terror of the Sea is There in Them	448
Jihad	210
Arafat	904
Philistines	1406
Bin Laden, Blood of the Poor	93
You will spit at Tradition, Al Kada	1430
Muhammed Omar	37
Taliban	81
Fire from the Heart	267
Saddam Hussein	150684
Saddam	87, 942
Hussein	3714, 3985
This is the King of Babylon	5564
Iraq	195

This list enumerates only the most prominent of the Bible Codes that make reference to events related to the attacks made on the Pentagon and the twin towers of the World Trade Center. 20 In my book *War on Terror—Unfolding Bible Prophecy*, 21 I documented compelling evidence that the late President Saddam Hussein of Iraq supported Osama bin Laden's terrorist attacks on American targets on September 11, 2001. Hussein had vowed to wage a "war of vengeance" against the United States following the Gulf War in 1991. Hussein rebuilt the city of Babylon and proclaimed that his destiny was to conquer Israel and her allies, just as King Nebuchadnezzar had done twenty-six centuries earlier.

The September 11 Terrorist Attack Bible Code: Ezekiel 7: 2– 8

In the first part of Ezekiel chapter 7 the Bible Code Digest researchers found another large group of interesting ELS code words that crossed through or appeared in close proximity to this key Ezekiel prophecy that relate to the terrible events of September 11, 2001.

More Bible Codes Found in Ezekiel 7: 2– 8 Related to the Sept. 11 Attack

New York
U.S.
An Unheard of Disaster
In the Morning
September 11
2001
bin Laden
Afghan
Taliban
Airliner
Firemen
Saddam
Iraq
Conspiracy
Devastation
Cruelty
Terror
Horrible
Death
Destruction
Butchery

The full list of ELS codes and the analysis of their statistical probability can be downloaded for examination at Bible Codes Digest's Web site. These fascinating ELS codes were found in a very powerful prophecy, Ezekiel 7: 2– 8, that God proclaimed to the unrepentant people of Israel before the final destruction of their nation, city, and Temple at the hands of the invading Babylonian army of King Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.

Ezekiel 7:2-8

2 Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land. 3 Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations. 4 And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 5 Thus saith the Lord GOD; An evil, an only evil, behold, is come. 6 An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come. 7 The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains. 8 Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations.

When God judges an unrepentant nation as He did with ancient Israel, He normally uses an evil nation such as the pagan Babylonian empire as His instrument of judgment. However, God will ultimately deliver His righteous judgment upon the pagan nation of Babylon as prophesied numerous times in Isaiah 13: 1, 6:19 and Revelation 18.

Computer programs such as Bible Codes 2000 are widely available to allow anyone to verify these codes for themselves. The program Bible Code 2000 can be purchased using the order form at the back of the book if you wish to personally research the Bible Codes.

Why Did God Place These Hidden Codes in the Bible?

For almost seventeen centuries, from the time of Emperor Constantine's conversion in A.D. 312 until the beginning of the last century, the Bible was generally accepted by the majority of Western culture as the inspired and authoritative Word of God. However, we have witnessed an unrelenting assault on the authority of the Bible by the intellectual elite, the academic community, liberal theologians, and the secular media during the last one hundred years.

Most people in our culture have been exposed to countless attacks on the authority and accuracy of the Scriptures throughout high school, college, and from the mass media. I believe that God has provided this extraordinary new evidence to prove to this generation of skeptics that the Bible is truly the Word of God. The complex nature of these codes means that the phenomenal discovery of many of these encoded words could not have occurred until the development of high-speed computers during the last twenty years.

In a sense, God secretly hid these fascinating codes within the text of the Bible thousands of years ago with a time lock that could not be opened until the arrival of our generation and the development of sophisticated computers. In His prophetic foreknowledge, God knew that our generation would be characterized by an unrelenting attack on the authority of the Scriptures. No previous generation needed the additional scientific evidence provided by the discovery of these codes as much as our present skeptical generation.

Hundreds of years ago, a famous rabbi known as the Vilna Gaon lived and taught in the city of Vilna, Latvia, near the Baltic Sea in northern Europe. This brilliant and mystical Jewish sage taught his students that God had hidden a vast amount of information secretly encoded within the Hebrew letters of the Torah. Consider the intriguing and suggestive statement about the hidden codes by this famous Jewish sage.

The rule is that all that was, is, and will be unto the end of time is included in Torah from first word to the last word. And not merely in a general sense, but including the details of every species and of each person individually and the most minute details of everything that happened to him from the day of his birth until his death; likewise of every kind of animal and beast and living thing that exists, and of herbage, and of all that grows or is inert. (Vilna Gaon, Introduction to Sifra Ditzniut)

There is a strong tradition that a number of codes were discovered in past centuries by various Jewish sages, including Rabbeinu Bachya, Moses Maimonides, and the Vilna Gaon. Since World War I, Rabbi Michael Weissmandl and others have taught about these codes. There is an interesting statement suggesting knowledge of the codes in the Jewish mystical writing known as the Zohar. "The entire Torah is replete with Divine Names. Divine Names run through every single word in the Torah." In approximately A.D. 1200, the brilliant Jewish sage Moses Maimonides, known as Rambam, made a curious comment about this statement in the Zohar that indicated he understood that there were complex codes hidden in the Torah. He said that the hidden codes provided another reason why a Torah scroll should be considered as unfit for use if even one single letter was missing from the text. The removal or addition of a single letter from the Hebrew text would eliminate the codes found hidden within that

section of text. Also, there is a suggestive statement in the Talmud that refers to the codes: "Everything is alluded to in the Torah."

A group called the Discovery Seminar, sponsored by the Aish HaTorah College of Jewish Studies, presents the phenomenon of the Bible Codes to Jewish groups and synagogues throughout the world. This group was created in Israel by a number of scientists, mathematicians, and Judaic scholars. In addition to giving presentations in Israel, Aish HaTorah has adapted the material to English, enabling their teams to share this fascinating information with Jewish audiences throughout the world showing the divine inspiration and authority of the Torah. Numerous agnostic Jews have reportedly returned to their religious roots in Orthodox Judaism as a result of their exposure to the Bible Codes.

The discovery of the Bible Codes revealing information about the life, death, and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth in the prophetic passages of the Old Testament, written centuries before His birth, provides powerful new evidence that Jesus is the true Messiah and the Son of God. The discovery in our generation of the hidden Bible Codes has fascinated millions of Jews, Christians, unbelievers, and skeptics during the last several years. However, a number of Christians have wondered why God would have placed a series of hidden codes within the Hebrew Bible text and not have placed a similar code within the New Testament. Research has been conducted regarding the possibility that the Bible

Code phenomenon might be found in the Greek text of the New Testament. I have funded a small team of

The Implications of Bible Code Research

Many scholars who are philosophically opposed to the existence of God and the inspiration of the Bible are stunned by this research. Despite many arguments and challenges the data still stands. Several secular scientific journals have declared that the ELS phenomenon in the Bible is real and not a result of fraud or computer error. The simple truth is that this phenomenon could not have occurred by random chance alone. Nor could any group of brilliant human beings, even with supercomputers at their disposal, produce this awesome result of encoding a huge number of significant names about future events within the surface text of the Torah.

Since all scholars agree that the five books of Moses were written thousands of years ago, we have compelling evidence that this ELS Bible Code phenomenon is another clearly authenticated signature of God upon the pages of Scripture. The evidence in the next chapter will reveal that God has encoded the name of His Son, the Messiah, Yeshua, throughout the key messianic prophecies in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

Other fascinating ELS discoveries.

Three Mary's and the Disciple John at the Cross

The Gospel of John records that three women named Mary (Miriam) were present at the crucifixion of Jesus, together with His beloved disciple, John (Yucatan). The gospel of John says: Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his

John 19:25-27

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

This moving passage reveals the profound love of Jesus for His mother Mary and His loyal friend John. We find that the names of the three Marys and the disciple John are encoded beside the name Jesus (Yeshua,), which is spelled out at a twenty-letter interval reading left to right beginning in Isaiah 53:10.

In Isaiah 53:11, starting with the fifth letter in the ninth word and counting every twentieth letter from left to right spells "*Ma 'al Yeshua Shmee ohz*", a phrase which means "exceedingly high, Yeshua is my strong name." From the yod, , in Yeshua's name, counting in reverse every twenty-eighth letter spells John. Isaiah 52: 13 says, "Behold, my Servant [Yeshua] shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." In Isaiah 53: 11, starting with the first letter in the first word and counting every forty-second letter from left to right spells "Messiah," Mashiach, . From the mem, in the word "Messiah," counting every twenty-third letter from left to right spells "Mary".

Remarkably, in Isaiah 53: 10, all three of the ELS names of Mary use the same letter yod, in the word ya'arik. This is the same letter that forms the first letter in the encoded names Yeshua and John. In Isaiah 53: 10, starting with the third letter in the seventh word and counting every sixth letter from right to left spells "Mary," Miryam. In Isaiah 53: 12, starting with the fifth letter in the fourth word and counting every forty-fourth letter from left to right again spells Mary. It is interesting to find the names of three Marys encoded in these verses beside the encoded names Yeshua and John when we remember that John's Gospel records that these four individuals were all present at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In addition to naming Mary, the mother of Jesus, we also find in Isaiah 53: 2, starting with the second letter in the first word and counting every 210th letter from right to left spells "Joseph," Yoseph, the name of Mary's husband.

"Disciples" Found in Isaiah 53

In Isaiah 53: 12, starting with the third letter of the second word and counting every fifty-fifth letter from left to right spells "*limmudim ahnan*", which means "the disciples mourn." Sometimes, the letter tav, precedes this word. In this same count of fifty-five, but adjacent to "disciples," we find the word "priest." In Isaiah 53: 5, starting with the second letter in the first word and counting every fifty-fifth letter from left to right spells "the Kohanim" (the priestly tribe) "*ha'kohanim*".

It is fascinating to discover that the names of almost every one of Jesus' disciples (Judas Iscariot is excluded) are encoded within Isaiah's messianic prophecy written seven centuries before Jesus was born.

The disciple's names are encoded as follows:

1. Peter. In Isaiah 53: 3, we find the name "Simon Peter," starting with the second letter in the fifth word and counting every nineteenth letter from right to left, the ELS code spells "Peter," Kepha, .

2. James, the son of Zabbadai. In Isaiah 52: 2, starting with the third letter in the ninth word and counting every thirty-fourth letter from left to right, the ELS code spells "James," Ya'akov.
3. John. In Isaiah 53: 10, starting with the fourth letter in the eleventh word and counting every twenty-eighth letter from left to right, the code spells "John," Yochanan.
4. Andrew. In Isaiah 53: 4, starting with the first letter in the eleventh word, which is "God" Elohim, and counting every forty-eighth letter from left to right, we find the encoded word "Andrew," And'drai.
5. Philip. In Isaiah 53: 5, starting with the third letter in the tenth word and counting every 133rd letter from left to right spells "Philip," Pilip.
6. Thomas. In Isaiah 53: 2, starting with the first letter in the eighth word and counting every thirty-fifth letter from right to left the encoded word spells "Thomas," Toma.
7. Matthew. There are three ways to spell the name of the disciple Matthew: Mati, Mattai, and Mattiyahu. The encoded word Mattai, is an accepted abbreviated form of Mattiyahu. In Isaiah 53: 8, starting with the first letter in the twelfth word and counting every 295th letter from left to right we find the encoded word "Matthew," Mattai.
8. James, son of Alphaeus, "*Ben Chalipi Ya'akov*". In Isaiah 52: 2, starting with the fourth letter in the third word and counting every twentieth letter from left to right the encoded word spells the word Ya'akov. Two of Christ's disciples were known by the name James. It is fascinating that we found the name "James" *Ya'akov* encoded twice within Isaiah 53.
9. Simon, (Zelotes) the Canaanite. *Shimon hakanai*. In Isaiah 52: 14, starting with the first letter in the second word and counting every forty-seventh letter from right to left we find the encoded word "Simon," Shimon, .
10. Thaddaeus. In Isaiah 53: 12, starting with the first letter of the eighth word and counting every fiftieth letter from left to right the encoded word spells the name "Thaddaeus," *Taddai*.
11. Matthias. In Isaiah 53: 5, starting with the fourth letter in the seventh word and counting every eleventh letter from left to right spells "Matthias," *Mattiyah*. It is fascinating to note that this name Matthias is the name of the last disciple who was chosen by lot by the elders of the early Church to replace the dead traitor Judas Iscariot, whose guilt in betraying Jesus Christ caused him to commit suicide. Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, records how Matthias, the replacement disciple, was chosen: "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias]; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1: 26).

It is noteworthy that in the early Church an essential qualification for choosing a disciple to replace the deceased Judas Iscariot was that the person must have personally witnessed the three and one half year ministry of Jesus Christ as well as His resurrection (Acts 1: 21-26). This eyewitness requirement was established to assure that Matthias could also personally testify to everyone about his personal, eyewitness experience of the life and ministry of Christ from His baptism to His death and resurrection from the dead, and finally, His ascension to heaven. It is interesting to note that the

names of virtually every one of Christ's disciples were found encoded near the name Yeshua within Isaiah's prophecy. Significantly, the name of Judas Iscariot, the Lord's betrayer, was not found encoded in this passage.

Jesus' Trial and the Names of the Two High Priests

The codes reveal the names of Israel's two high priests at the time of Jesus' trial. Starting with the third letter in the seventh word in Isaiah 52: 15 and counting every forty-first letter from right to left spells "Caiaphas", *Kayafa*, the name of the high priest of Israel named in the Gospel account of the trial of Jesus. In Isaiah 53: 3, starting with the fifth letter in the sixth word and counting every forty-fifth letter from right to left spells "Annas," *Ahnan*, who was the former high priest and the influential uncle of Caiaphas. The New Testament reveals the names of these high priests in Luke 3: 2: "Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." The high (chief) priests were leaders in the Sanhedrin trial in the Temple that lead to Christ's crucifixion, according to John 19:15 - "But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."

The Pharisees, the Levites, King Herod, Rome, and Caesar

The Pharisees and King Herod were also involved in the crucifixion. We find their names encoded in Isaiah 53: 9. Starting with the second letter in the fourteenth word and counting every sixty-fourth letter from left to right, we find the word "Pharisee," *pahrush*. These Jewish religious leaders were a strong influence in both the Temple and in the broader Israeli society. They encouraged people to follow the strict religious laws of the Scriptures and the written and oral traditions based on the teachings of their rabbis over the centuries. In Isaiah 53: 6, starting with the first letter in the fourth word and counting every twenty-ninth letter from left to right, we find the encoded words "the man Herod," *Herod*. The fact that both the names Pharisees and Herod are encoded in Isaiah's messianic prophecy is remarkable. In Isaiah 53: 11, starting with the first letter of the second word and counting every fourteenth letter from left to right, we find the Hebrew word "Levis," *Levim*, clearly identifying the Temple priests, chosen from the Jewish tribe of Levi, who joined in the conspiracy against Jesus. In addition, starting with the second letter in the thirteenth word in Isaiah 53: 9 and counting every seventh letter from left to right, the encoded letters spell "the evil Roman city," *rah eer Romi*, the power ruling the known world at that time that actually ordered the death of Jesus. The Jewish authorities did not possess the legal power to inflict a death sentence upon any offender found guilty in their Sanhedrin Court in the Temple. The only way a death sentence could be legally carried out by the Jewish authorities in Judea at that time was to find a Roman law that the prisoner had also broken and to then appeal to the Roman governor to sentence the person to death under the laws of Rome.

The Gentile soldiers of the Roman Empire who were present at the crucifixion spiritually represented the Roman emperor and the entire Gentile world who also rejected the claims of Jesus as Messiah, the Son of God, and thus spiritually the Gentiles shared the responsibility for the execution of God's Messiah. In this sense, all of humanity, Jews and Gentiles, was represented at the crucifixion of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. In Isaiah 53: 11, starting with the fourth letter in the seventh word and counting every 194th letter from left to right, we find the encoded words *Kaisar ahmail ovoid*, which mean "wicked, Caesar wretched [perish]," or alternatively phrased as

"wicked Caesar, to perish." The wicked Roman emperor Tiberius died within five years following the death of Jesus Christ.

I could go on and on, but I think you get the point. Can any reader have any remaining doubt that the Bible Codes identify Jesus of Nazareth as the prophesied Messiah who died for our sins as the Son of God? With all the evidence I have presented in this chapter (and there is a mountain of more evidence), how can anyone deny the reality that God placed these hidden messages in the Bible Code, and that we were meant to discover them at the end of the age?

What would be the purpose of God encoding anything?

Jesus spoke in parables, which is by definition speaking cryptically. He spoke in parables in order that they who were "*without*" would not understand.

Matthew 13:13

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Prophets did the same thing - they spoke as God gave them the word - cryptically. They often themselves did not understand the message they were giving. Now, Satan has from the beginning of time wanted to destroy God's purpose and plan in creating mankind. So what does a loving heavenly Father do? He hides it from the enemy. The Bible Code is not about something that is hidden *from* you; it is hidden *for* you from a loving Father.

He did not include Satan in His revelation at all. That's why the Bible talks about angels "desiring to look into these things." Surely this includes, and perhaps is even limited to, the fallen angels. They long to understand certain things in the Bible; but it is not a book for them. This is a book that God gave to His children. This is an age of confusion; in this confused age, God is shining His light. God says it is His glory to conceal things, and it is an honor for us to search them out.

Proverbs 25:2

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.

We are called under Jesus to a new order - the Melchizedek priesthood - to be kings and priests. And He has given us an anointing under the Holy Spirit to do such things - to search out a matter. Consider the priests under the old covenant. They wore an ephod, which consisted of 12 precious stones. And they also had two other stones in the breastplate - the Urim and the Thummim. When the priests would go into the sanctuary to speak to God at particular times, God would speak to them through these two stones.

Exodus 28:30

And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually.

Now concerning those of the unsaved who try to interpret these Bible Codes - surely not every heathen who puts on this "ephod" is a priest. If you try to interpret the Bible Codes without Jesus, all you will find is gibberish. But if you have Jesus, and accordingly the Holy Spirit, God will use them to reveal hidden things that God wishes you to know.

The angel told Daniel to "*shut up the words, and seal the book*", until the time of the end.

Daniel 12:4

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

This is the time of the end; the book is no longer sealed. The Bible Codes is one way God is using to increase our knowledge.

Now that I have introduced you to the Bible Code phenomenon, in the next chapter I will present some rather startling discoveries in these codes that I have made recently.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Recent Startling Discoveries in the Bible Codes

As an avid explorer in the Bible Code phenomenon, I have recently made what I believe to be hugely significant discoveries. If others have discovered this, I am unaware of it. In fact, when I shared these with some popular Bible scholars I have been in contact with, they were electrified.

For my Bible Code research, I use the popular and well regarded software program "Keys to the Bible" that was designed by an Israeli firm. I highly recommend this software to anyone who may be interested in pursuing this on their own. They can be found at <http://www.biblecodesplus.com/>.

On the following page is a picture of the matrix this program produced. It has an ELS skip of 7.

Two of the words shown are "President Obama." By itself, this is mildly startling. But the verses where the words appear are very significant: Eze. 38:2-3 (Obama), and Eze. 38:2 (President). Also, the fact that his name appears in such a very short passage of Scripture is highly significant.

Ezekiel 38:2-3

Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

"Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal", is one of the many titles of the Antichrist.

This following matrix reveals 17 words found in this very short passage (Eze 37:28-38:4):

Shown: President Obama, The Wicked One, Gog, Magog.

Not shown: Simon, Prophet, Messenger, Two Witnesses
Apostate Israel, World, Temple, Fag.

The Bible Code software program I use also produces the odds of these words appearing by random chance. The chances range from 1 in 1 and up. It is tricky to discern their significance. But when the odds are huge, as in the following two matrixes, surely this is of great significance. For example, the matrix shown on the following page has odds of 1 chance in 678 quadrillion.

`Bible Code Matrix BHOGOG7 - Axis - "Obama" Skip 7 Ezekiel 37:28 - 38:4

Odds of 11 of these words occurring by random chance are 678 Quadrillion to 1
(1 chance in 678,567,696,639,726,720)

Matrix View Codes Statistics Databases Tools Help Exit

Show nikud Modify Matrix Zoom-in Zoom-out Previous code Next code Additional code Identity word Proximity rank Unmark all Save screen Print screen From: Ezekiel 1:1 To: Ezekiel 48:35 Skip 7 Area

Codes: OBAMA (2)

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
7914	ש	י	ב	ת	ו	כ	ם
7915	ל	ע	ו	ל	ם	ו	י
7916	ה	י	ב	ר	י	ה	
7917	ו	ה	א	ל	י	א	
7918	מ	ר	ב	ן	א	ד	ם
7919	ש	י	ם	פ	נ	י	ך
7920	ל	ג	ו	ג	ו	א	ך
7921	ה	מ	ג	ו	ו	ג	ו
7922	ש	י	א	ר	א	ש	ך
7923	ש	ך	ו	ת	ב	ל	ו
7924	י	ב	א	ע	ל	י	
7925	ו	א	מ	ר	ת	פ	
7926	ה	א	מ	ר	א	ד	ן
7927	י	ה	ו	ה	ה	ן	
7928	נ	י	א	ל	י	ך	ג
7929	ג	ר	ש	ו	י	א	ך
7930	א	ש	מ	ש	ך	ו	ת
7931	ל	ו	ש	ו	ב	ב	ך
7932	ת	י	ך	ו	נ	ת	ת
7933	י	ח	ח	י	ם	ב	ל
7934	ח	י	ך	ו	ה	ו	
7935	צ	א	ת	י	א	ו	ת
7936	ך	ו	א	ת	פ	ל	ח
7937	י	ל	ך	ס	ו	ס	י
7938	ם	ו	פ	ר	ש	י	ם

Gog

Magog

Obama

President

The Wicked One

Eze 38:2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him,
Eze 38:3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

Again, it is **highly significant** as to the verse where "Obama" appears:

Ezekiel 38:2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him,

I have included another matrix for your careful consideration. This rather significant search seems to indicate that the Firstfruits Rapture could occur on a specific date in the Jewish year 2019-2020. This matrix includes the words:

Taken Away, Tashlikh*, 2015-2016, Great Tribulation, Daniel's Seventieth Week, President Obama, Jerusalem, et al.

* *Tashlikh* (Hebrew: תשליך , meaning "casting off") is a long-standing Jewish practice usually performed on the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.

Both the matrixes included in this chapter have highly significant odds:

1 chance in 678 quadrillion
Eze 37:28- 38:4

1 chance in 584 quadrillion
Dan 7:16-11:4

Bible Code Matrix TASH304 Skip 304 (÷ 1/2) Daniel 7:16-11:4
Odds of 11 of these words occurring by random chance are 154 Quadrillion to 1
(1 chance in 154,400,789,676,912,224)

Matrix View Codes Statistics Databases Tools Help Exit

From: Daniel 7:16 To: Daniel 11:4 Skip: 152 Area: Panel1

Bible Code Matrix TASHLIKH Skip 304 (1/2) Daniel 7:16-11:4

Codes: TASHLIKH

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So what are we to make of all this? Some of the answers seem to be fairly obvious. It could be that these codes are telling us the President Obama is the Antichrist - at the very least, he certainly has much to do with the end times scenario - but I cannot state unequivocally what his role is. To this I can only offer speculation. Certainly Obama is the chief contender of anyone presently in power; he is the head of the most powerful military on earth. And it is unlikely, with such little time left, that someone else could rise to the role. Only time will tell. And certainly we should consider that my interpretation of these Bible Codes is not infallible.

But most importantly, it should be noted that the last matrix apparently shows the date of the beginning of Daniel's 70th Week as in the Jewish year 2019/2020.

By now you are wondering, "How can this be reliable?" No one can blame you for being skeptical. But that's why I went to great lengths to show you the reliability of the Bible Code phenomenon in the last chapter. It is up to you to decide its validity. But as further confirmation, I have factored what I have found together with other signs in a chart that I present in a later chapter, *Daniel's Seventieth Week and the 45 Days*. This chart correlates this information with Scripture concerning this all important 70th Week. But before we go to this chart, first it is important to learn a few things about the Biblical Feasts and their relationship to "Blood Moons."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Prophecy of the Seven Jewish Feasts

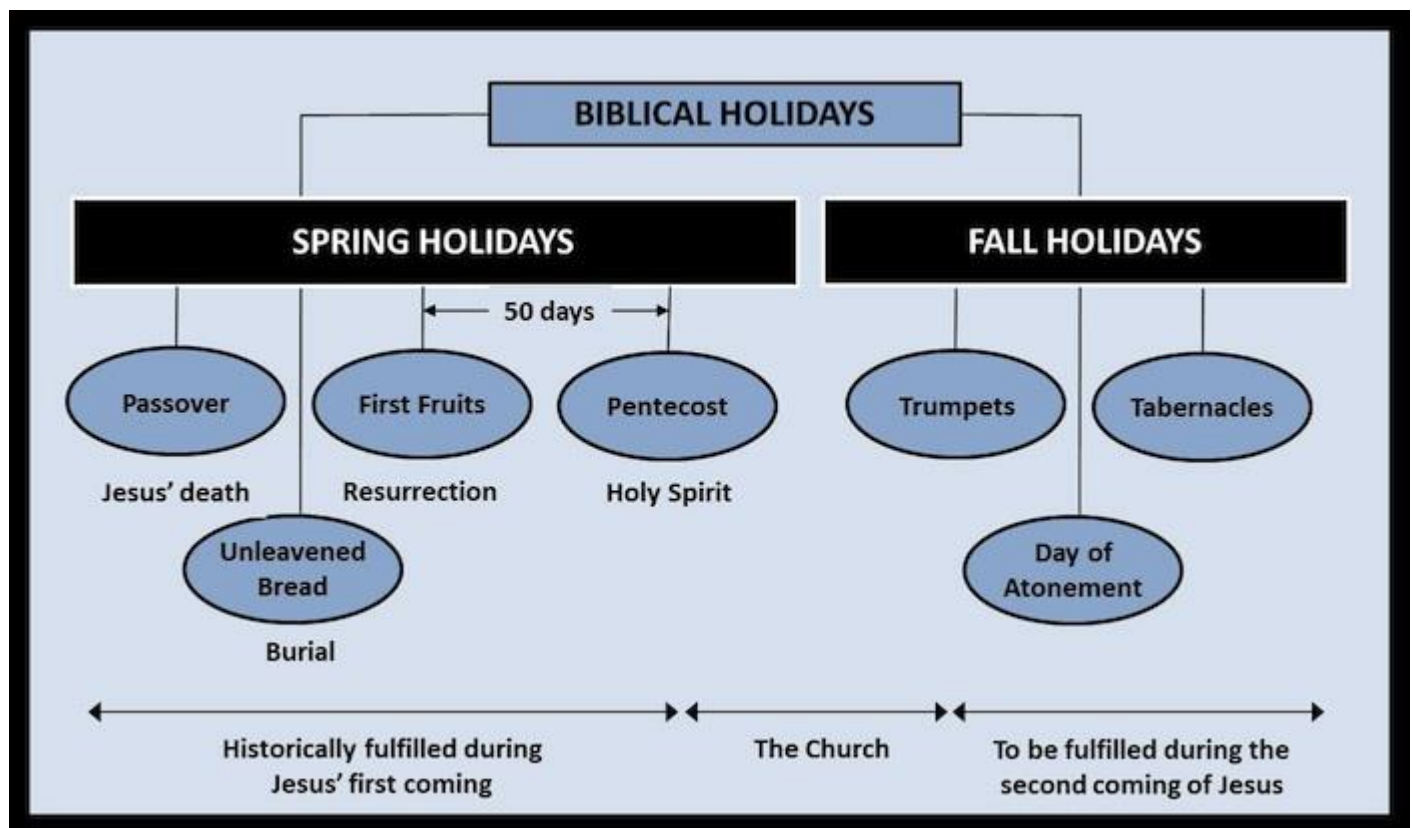
In Leviticus 23 we find that the Festivals of the Lord were appointed times established as yearly rehearsals that taught both historically and prophetically the whole plan of God concerning the coming of the Messiah and the redemption of man. The first four feasts have been fulfilled and the Jewish community celebrates them historically. They are Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits and the Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost). These four Spring Feasts are considered to be an interrelated whole where Pentecost is the completion of the process begun at Passover.

*** Passover – pictures the Death of Jesus Christ

*** Feast of Unleavened Bread – pictures the Burial of Jesus Christ

*** Feast of First Fruits – pictures the Resurrection of Christ

*** Pentecost – pictures the Descent of the Holy Spirit & the Birth of the Church



While the first four Festivals occur in close proximity, an entire season passes before the Fall Feasts begin. This long period represents the dispensation of grace that we now live in. The last three feasts (Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles) are celebrated in the fall season and are yet to be fulfilled - they remain prophetic in nature.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Feast of the Trumpets - | Rosh HaShanah - pictures the regathering of the nation of Israel. |
| Feast of Atonement - | Yom Kippur - pictures the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when He cleanses the rebuilt but defiled Temple and brings the nation of Israel to repentance and forgiveness. |
| Feast of Tabernacles - | Pictures the coming of Jesus Christ to tabernacle with his people, and the rejoicing before the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ. |

All the feasts, including the Feast of Trumpets will find their prophetic fulfillment near the very end of the 2,520 days. I'm not an advocate of a Feast of Trumpets rapture. The Feast of Trumpets is one of the Feasts of Israel, and Israel was never promised a rapture. The Rapture is an event unique to the Church, so there's no reason for it to be fulfilled on the date of a feast intended for Israel. I believe Jesus' Second Coming is a much more likely fulfillment of the Day of Atonement.

Now God's plan for humanity is clearly found in Leviticus 23 through the establishment of the Seven Feasts. The number seven throughout the Bible represents completeness. Just as seven days finish a weekly cycle, so will seven festival occasions complete the work of God on Earth.

The Jewish Feasts will take us beyond the Apocalypse. The seventh feast, the joyous Feast of Tabernacles, will come into its ultimate fulfillment just before the true new age dawns. This will bring in the Millennium of Messiah, that glorious age to come. The deserts will bloom and streams of waters will break forth upon the dry ground. God will camp out with mankind for 1,000 years as Emmanuel, "*God with us*". And as a shepherd feeds and tends his sheep He will draw His people to Himself.

The first four of the Seven Jewish Feasts have already been fulfilled. They were fulfilled in spectacular fashion. They were fulfilled exactly on the auspicious Hebrew calendar dates on which they have been celebrated in times past, the same dates that will be celebrated forever more. The three spring feasts were fulfilled by Jesus our Savior. And the summer Feast of Pentecost was fulfilled as well. It was fulfilled by the Holy Spirit 2,000 years ago. Here is the situation so far.

1. Passover ✓ Fulfilled! (By Jesus/Yeshua at His crucifixion on Nisan 14 in the spring of 32 A.D.)
2. Feast of Unleavened Bread ✓ Fulfilled! (By Jesus/Yeshua at His burial in the tomb on Nisan 15 in the spring of 32 A.D.)
3. Feast of Firstfruits ✓ Fulfilled! (By Jesus/Yeshua at His Resurrection on Nisan 17 in the spring of 32 A.D.)
4. Feast of Pentecost ✓ Fulfilled! (By the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost on Sivan 7 in the summer of 32 A.D.)

(A gap of 2000 years or so has allowed the Light of Israel to go forth into the nations for the Gentiles to be evangelized).



----- WE ARE HERE -----

Now here come the Fall Feasts. They are no doubt just up ahead.

- 5. The Feast of Trumpets Unfulfilled(as of yet).
Tishri 1 in a future Jewish New Year.
- 6. The Day of Atonement Unfulfilled(as of yet).
Tishri 10 in a future Jewish year.
This will be the final Day of Reckoning, for that year, for the Jubilee, and for the age. The Jewish nation and "all Israel" will be saved! - Zech.12:8-13:1, Rom. 11
- 7. The Feast of Tabernacles Unfulfilled(as of yet).
Tishri 15 will come five days after that final epic Day of Atonement. This will mark the coming of Messiah to tabernacle with His covenant people.

Thus begins the long awaited 1,000 year Millennium of Messiah.

All these above are the Seven Jewish Feasts. As we can see, the next three events on God's agenda will bring in the fulfillment of each of the three Fall Feasts of Israel.

So will the Hebrew calendar dates of those Fall Feasts deliver up earthshaking future events? It would be foolish of us to believe otherwise. Look at the first four feasts. Weren't the first four feasts fulfilled in spectacular fashion? And have we not already seen four epic events unfold right on those very auspicious dates on the Hebrew calendar to which they belong?

Dear saints: all seven of these Jewish Feasts have been celebrated annually since the day Moses gave them to us at Mt. Sinai 3500 years ago. So every one of the seven must be extremely important. Right? So, will every one of those Seven Feasts of Israel, including the last three, the Fall Feasts, (Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles), explode into their New Covenant fulfillment as well?

Most assuredly they will!

As we have seen, the first four of the feasts, the spring feasts, have already had their New Covenant fulfillment. They were fulfilled by Jesus Himself in his death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus fulfilled them right on the set calendar dates of the feasts. He entered Jerusalem 2,000 years ago right on the day appointed in His first coming as Messiah. He came as the Suffering Servant, riding on a donkey. Four days later, just as the Passover Lambs were being killed He gave His life blood for us on the cross of Calvary. Surely He was the promised Sacrifice Lamb. So He was crucified on Passover. He was buried that night and laid in the tomb just in time for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. On the third day he rose from the grave. On the Feast of Firstfruits He was resurrected as the firstfruits from the dead.

50 days later the Holy Spirit fell upon the 120 in the upper room. This happened right on the Feast of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit outpouring seen that day was unprecedented and glorious. The revival of Israel spread into the city of Jerusalem and thence to Judea, Samaria, and eventually to the utmost parts of the earth. Thus was fulfilled the summer Feast of Pentecost. This epic event happened right on the very day of the Hebrew calendar that saw Moses bring the Law down from Mount Sinai to the children of Israel. The

Feast of Pentecost was Israel's birthday. Israel's birthday is also turned out to be the birthday of the Church! Is God trying to tell us something here? - Gal.3:29, Rom.11, Eph.2:12-13, 1Pet.2:9

These were four blockbuster events in the covenant history of Israel. From the precedent set by these earlier four feasts we can know for a certainty that the next three feasts, the Fall Feasts will rock our world as well. They will erupt into history in just as spectacular a fashion as those former four feasts.

The Seven Jewish Feasts are very important for Christian-Messianic believers to understand. All seven of them are celebrations of epic events in the holy history of God's covenant people. That history involves the saints from both Old Testament times and New Testament times. The feasts mark out the significant events of the first coming of Christ in His priestly role as the Suffering Servant 2,000 years ago. Then they run on into and through the end-time drama when He returns in His kingdom role as the Conquering King.

The Scope of the Seven Feasts of Israel as They Set Forth God's Wonderful Plan of the Ages

God began His work in the nation of Israel about 3,500 years ago. The exodus from Egypt took place in approximately 1,500 B.C. Soon afterwards, at Mount Sinai, God, through his servant Moses, brought the nation of Israel the Law. Right there at Sinai Moses instituted the Seven Feasts of Israel. They are recorded in the Old Testament book of Leviticus chapter 23. Each one of these seven holy convocations is laid out on the Hebrew calendar. God calls upon His covenant people to join Him in celebrating them every year. The feasts will continue to be celebrated in the Millennium to come.

The first three of the Seven Jewish Feasts are in the springtime. One is in the summer and three are in the fall. All seven of these holy days, (from which we get our word 'holiday'), are special occasions in which God calls His people aside. As the Israelites would go up to Jerusalem to the feast they would join with the whole Assembly of God in a grand family camp-meeting of sorts. There at these feasts certain spiritual lessons would be demonstrated before their eyes. It would provide a wonderful opportunity to teach their children the ways of their God.

The seven Jewish Feasts are not just quaint religious festivals of a bygone era. They are, (and will be in times to come), occasions when God's people pause to remember seven epic days in their history. These seven noteworthy events will be memorials of events that will have occurred on those very same special Hebrew calendar dates set out by Moses 3500 years ago. Each feast will be a waypoint in our understanding of the character of our God. Each feast will illustrate a certain essential truth relating to the unfolding of the Everlasting Covenant into the history of this earth. Step by step the God of Israel is establishing and explaining certain truths. He is helping His people to come to know Him. The feasts are signposts guiding God's covenant people in their personal and national pilgrimage. They are waypoints into the Kingdom of God. Each feast provides a wonderful occasion for parents to teach these lessons and precepts to their children.

These are the seven Jewish Feasts. For those who ask the big questions of life and wonder what God is doing in this world, a study here will give some definite answers. Our God is not idle. He is hard at work on a continuing seven part project. He is redeeming, sanctifying and glorifying His covenant people out of their dispersions among a lost mankind. He is drawing out for Himself a chosen people, even a royal priesthood and a holy nation. (Exo. 19:6, 1Pet. 2:9) In the same process He is defeating Lucifer and the angelic powers of darkness.

These Seven Jewish Feasts are not just "religion". They are real past and future history, a history that is in the hands of the Sovereign God of the Cosmos. They are waypoints on a roadmap that tracks from the passion of Jesus to the final glorification at the end of the Millennium. The Feasts of Israel can have a personal application in a devotional sort of way as well. They track the progress of believers as they go forward into their own personal walk with God. He takes them from salvation, to infilling of the Holy Spirit, to sanctification and ultimately into glorification.

The most important application of the Seven Jewish Feasts comes as they relate to the national history of Israel and God's people around the world. The first four feasts that have been fulfilled in the past show God's Judeo-Christian people where they and their God have been. The three feasts whose fulfillment is yet future show us where we are going.

In these seven sacred convocations God's people learn God's plan of the ages. His agenda for the redemption of man and the restoration of the cosmos has already been set. It was decreed in heaven from before time began. Things on this planet may be in a mess right now, and getting worse by the day. But that will not be always the case. God will step into history again. He will surprise us again just as He has done in the past. He has an ongoing program. God's agenda is in full operation and right on schedule. Four feasts are down. Three fall feasts are yet to go.

World History is Ultimately God's Holy History

God is at work in history. He is the sovereign author and the finisher of our faith. He is the active agent in this unfolding story. So we know that the conclusion of the saga will be far more magnificent than we can presently imagine. Furthermore, God is now operating in ever increasing ways by His Holy Spirit and through the greatly expanding witness of His covenant people around the world.

Earth is not the only place where God is going to make some changes. Up in the heavenly realms Lucifer is increasingly finding himself in a spot of bother. He is being progressively cast down. At some point in the remote past he was cast down from the throne of God into the lower heavens (Isa. 14:12).

In the middle of the 70th week Lucifer will be cast down a step further from the second heaven to earth. (Rev. 12:6-10) At the end of the 70th week he will be cast down even further. He will be bound in the abyss, the bottomless pit, for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:1-3) At the end of the thousand year reign of Messiah, Lucifer will have his final play in the Millennial Rebellion. After that Lucifer/Satan will be cast down even further. The Great White Throne Judgment will order Him cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity (Rev. 20:10.)

The Significance of the Seven Jewish Feasts for Christians Today

Why is this information on the Seven Feasts of Israel so important? It is because the covenant people of God have not just purchased a "ticket to heaven". They are in a blood covenant relationship with Jesus Christ/Yeshua Hamashiach. At some point in the future the saints will be going up onto the stage of history. The next 3 feasts provide vital keys to what will happen. In some future September-October time window the next event will come into its epic and climactic fulfillment. What is the big event that will have happened? Daniel tells us (Dan. 9:27.)

Daniel 9:27

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Our sovereign God is in control. He, and He alone is writing the play of the ages. And His epic saga is well underway. Four chapters, even four Feasts of Israel are fulfilled. Three feasts are left to go for this age.

And as we look at the final Fall Feasts it becomes obvious that we are not just passive theological observers in all this. The lives of each one of us will be actively woven into the story. Every Christian believer is a living epistle read of men. God only knows what adventures and wonders that lie ahead of each one of us. As the feasts move forward our involvement as covenant partners with YHVH/God is taking us onwards. We are being drawn into the grand and splendid purposes of God, towards the climax of this age and into glories we have not yet seen.

Earthshaking events in holy history are up ahead. They will break into our future in spectacular fashion. God will revive His people. There will be an epic End-Time Revival. Joel saw this magnificent awakening of the saints rising up in the end-time and coming to a peak right at the end of the age amidst the 6th seal cosmic signs when the sun turns to darkness and the moon to blood (Joel 2:28-32.) But for many in western Christendom this will not be a happy surprise. Many, even Christian believers, are bound and determined to go their own way. The woman of wisdom is crying out in the streets (Pro. 1.) But they remain willingly ignorant of the things of God. So for them these events will be a rude awakening.

Now is the time to get to know our God both in Spirit and in Truth. Now is the time to open our hearts and open our Bibles and get to know Him personally. We are His "called-out congregation", we are His ecclesia. We are His church, even the Congregation of Israel. He is calling us, even wooing us, to walk with Him in the gentle bonds of Agape love.

And why is this so important, you ask? Because we are in a religious fog. A thick smokescreen of religious misinformation is obscuring the way ahead. We are in an information war so sinister that we are scarcely aware that we are being led astray. The end-time information we as western evangelicals have been given is quite incorrect. We are not passive in the covenant as we have been told. Far from it. We are a responsible party in the heralding of our coming Messiah. And we will answer for any failure to do so.

We are His witnesses!

Awesome days lie ahead up there on the Road to Paradise. Oh yes. There is a race to be won. Some group of saints will run on that final leg of the relay race. Some company of committed saints will break the tape at the end. It will be grand finale of this age. Unfortunately, some will also fall short. Let's hope this is not you, dear brother.

As the final curtain of the history of this age opens each one of us will have a vital role to play. God has given us this time for us to get to know Him. Only then shall we learn and understand our parts and get to know our lines. Because the curtain of Israel's history will surely open up on some future Rosh Hashanah. This is not a voyeurist's Hollywood melodrama. It will be a stupendous event of great drama involving us! And it will no doubt erupt suddenly in our lifetime!

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The Significance of Blood Moons in Relation to Biblical Feasts

First of all, just what are "Blood Moons"?

Lunar eclipses occur when Earth's shadow blocks the sun's light, which otherwise reflects off the moon. There are three types, with the most dramatic being a total lunar eclipse, in which Earth's shadow completely covers the moon. These total lunar eclipses are often referred to as "Blood Moons".

What is a Lunar Eclipse?

A lunar eclipse can occur only at full moon. A total lunar eclipse can happen only when the sun, Earth and moon are perfectly lined up - anything less than perfection creates a partial lunar eclipse or no eclipse at all. Some understanding of simple celestial mechanics explains how lunar eclipses work.

Because the moon's orbit around Earth lies in a slightly different plane than Earth's orbit around the sun, perfect alignment for an eclipse doesn't occur at every full moon. A total lunar eclipse develops over time, typically a couple hours for the whole event. Here's how it works: Earth casts two shadows that fall on the moon during a lunar eclipse: The umbra is a full, dark shadow. The penumbra is a partial outer shadow. The moon passes through these shadows in stages. The initial and final stages - when the moon is in the penumbral shadow - are not so noticeable, so the best part of an eclipse is during the middle of the event, when the moon is in the umbral shadow.

Types of lunar eclipses

Total lunar eclipse: Earth's full (umbral) shadow falls on the moon. The moon won't completely disappear, but it will be cast in an eerie darkness that makes it easy to miss if you were not looking for the eclipse. Some sunlight passing through Earth's atmosphere is scattered and refracted, or bent, and refocused on the moon, giving it a dim glow even during totality. If you were standing on the moon, looking back at the sun, you'd see the black disk of Earth blocking the entire sun, but you'd also see a ring of reflected light glowing around the edges of Earth — that's the light that falls on the moon during a total lunar eclipse.

Partial lunar eclipse: Some eclipses are only partial. But even a total lunar eclipse goes through a partial phase on either side of totality. During the partial phase, the sun, Earth and moon are not quite perfectly aligned, and Earth's shadow appears to take a bite out of the moon.

Penumbral lunar eclipse: This is the least interesting type of eclipse, because the moon is in Earth's faint outer (penumbral) shadow. Unless you're a seasoned skywatcher, you likely won't notice the effect.

The blood-red moon

The moon may turn red or coppery colored during the total portion of an eclipse. The red moon is possible because while the moon is in total shadow, some light from the sun passes through Earth's atmosphere and is bent toward the moon. While other colors in the spectrum are blocked and scattered by Earth's atmosphere, red light tends to make it through easier. The earth's atmosphere absorbs most of the blue color in the light spectrum; that's why we see our sky as blue.



The exact color that the moon appears depends on the amount of dust and clouds in the atmosphere, according to NASA scientists. If there are extra particles in the atmosphere, from say a recent volcanic eruption, the moon will appear a darker shade of red. So much for the scientific explanation of blood moons.

But God says He uses the moon, and the sun, and the stars as signs to earth dwellers.

Genesis 1:14-15

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: 15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

Jesus Christ Himself said, referring to the days before His second coming:

Luke 21:11

11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

Luke 21:25

25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Also speaking of His second coming - to rule this world, and to deliver mankind from its greatest crisis in all human history - Jesus foretold: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars [meteors] will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken [an incredible cosmic quaking and shaking].

Matthew 24:29-31

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Such signs are also mentioned as occurring before the day of the Lord in the Tanakh -- the Old Testament Scriptures (Joel 2:30-31; Joel 2:10; Joel 3:14-16).

Does God often send mysterious "signs" in the heavens before He performs mighty works in the earth? What do the Scriptures say about this?

The prophet Joel tells us,

Joel 2:31

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

These awesome occurrences in the skies and heavens will stagger mankind, causing terrible fright and anxiety. John in Revelation prophesied, that in the period just before the coming of the Messiah, and the "Day of the Lord," that great signs would take place. One such example is here:

Revelation 6:12

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

Revelation 6:13-14

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

After this, then, comes the final "Day of the Lord" - the time when God Himself begins to punish the nations, and bring His divine judgments of wrath and fury.

God definitely sends signs and wonders in the heavens to warn of coming disasters. And these signs and wonders often occur in relation to the seven Biblical feasts of the Jews. Now consider the relationship of the feasts of the Lord, the blood moons, and the 2,550 days of Daniel (1,260 + 1,290).

There are 4 blood moons (lunar eclipses) and 2 solar eclipses connected with God's Holy Days that occur in 2014-2015:

2014 - 2015 Jewish Holiday Eclipse & Comet Schedule

						
16 Jan 2014 Tu BiSh'vat Comet	15 Apr 2014 Jewish Passover	08 Oct 2014 Feast of Tabernacle	20 Mar 2015 Jewish New Year	04 Apr 2015 Jewish Passover	13 Sep 2015 Feast of Trumpets	28 Sep 2015 Feast of Tabernacle

The lunar eclipses as shown as follows (these can be verified at the NASA Eclipse Website:)
<http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>

Passover	April 15, 2014
Feast of Tabernacles	October 8, 2014
Passover	April 4, 2015
Feast of Tabernacles	September 28, 2015

The two solar eclipses connected with God's Holy Days in 2014-2015 each occur one day prior to these significant dates:

Adar 29/Nisan 1(new year)	March 20, 2015
Feast of Trumpets	September 13, 2015

It was on Nisan 1 that the Hebrew New Year's Day occurred, according to the Scriptures (Exo.12:1-2). On the anniversary of this date, one year later, Moses raised up the Tabernacle of God, inaugurated it, and the glory of God descended from heaven (Exodus 40:2, 17, 34.)

The real shocker is that this phenomenon is extremely rare. For this pattern of eclipses to fall on both Passover and Sukkot in two years in a row, and for two solar eclipses to occur on important Holy Days in the same year (2015), defies incredible odds. This phenomenon will not occur again in the 21st century, (and in fact for almost 600 years.)

Scripture tells us that the second coming of Jesus will be preceded by "signs in the heavens", particularly the signs that "the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood", as we saw in the verses above in Matthew and Joel.

NASA, the National Aeronautical Space Administration which is comprised of the most brilliant physicists and astronomers in the world, has precisely and accurately documented on their websites every Lunar and Solar Eclipse from 3,000 BC to 3,000 AD. and the earth, thereby darkening the sun.

These coming Blood Moons begin April 15, 2014 and end September 28, 2015. NASA also tells us that the "fullest" view of this first Blood Moon will be seen across North and South America, Australia, and

Pacifica at exactly 3:47 AM Eastern Standard Time the night of April 15, 2014. This date will be easy to remember; it's IRS tax day.

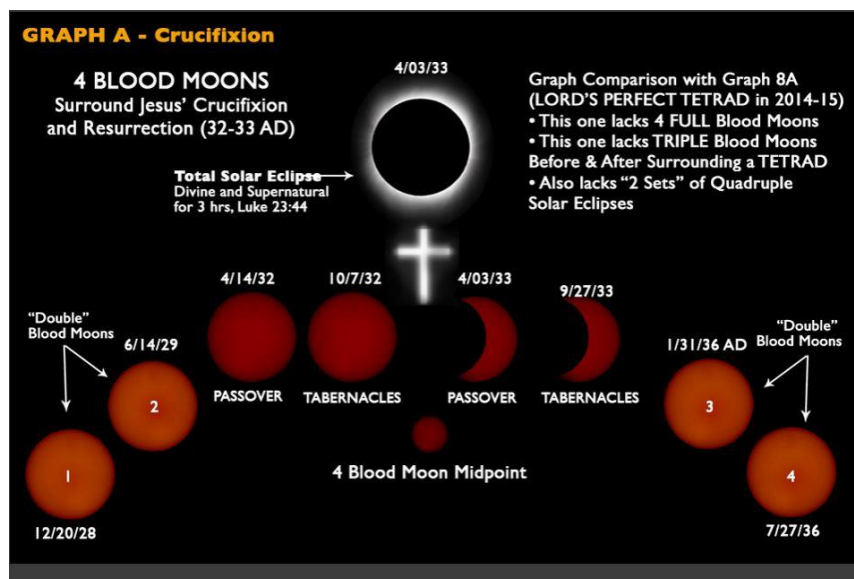
Now, even more rare is the fact that the coming Blood Moons will be occurring exactly to the day on 2 of the most special Holy Holidays (Feasts) of the Lord as described in Leviticus 23:2. Those being 2 consecutive Feasts of Passover and 2 consecutive Feasts of Tabernacles. The Feast of Passover marks the day when the Lord supernaturally enables the Exodus from Egypt of all the enslaved Jewish people and their leader Moses, some 3,500 years ago. The Feast of Tabernacles welcomes the Glory of God's protection and the coming of his presence to all Jews and Gentiles alike.

Here's the kicker. This amazing phenomenon of "Biblical" Blood Moons has occurred only 7 previous times in world history since 3000 BC.

Yes; there have been 7 special Lunar Tetrads since the Lord Jesus Christ walked the earth, and there is an 8th coming up in the 2014/2015 time frame. The word *tetrad* is synonymous with the words *quadruplet* and *four*. It is defined as "a group or arrangement of four." So a Lunar Tetrad is an arranged grouping of four total lunar eclipses. The arrangement of tetrads we are referring to as "special" is as follows: Total lunar eclipses (blood moons) during 2 consecutive years on the first and last of the 7 "feasts of the LORD" (Leviticus 23:4). The first and last of the 7 feasts are Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. (See the time accelerated animation of a Blood Moon to the right). The Blood Moon is mentioned in both the Old and New testaments (cf. Joel 2:31, Acts 2:20, Rev. 6:12).

The dates of these successive "special Lunar Tetrads" in times past are as follows:

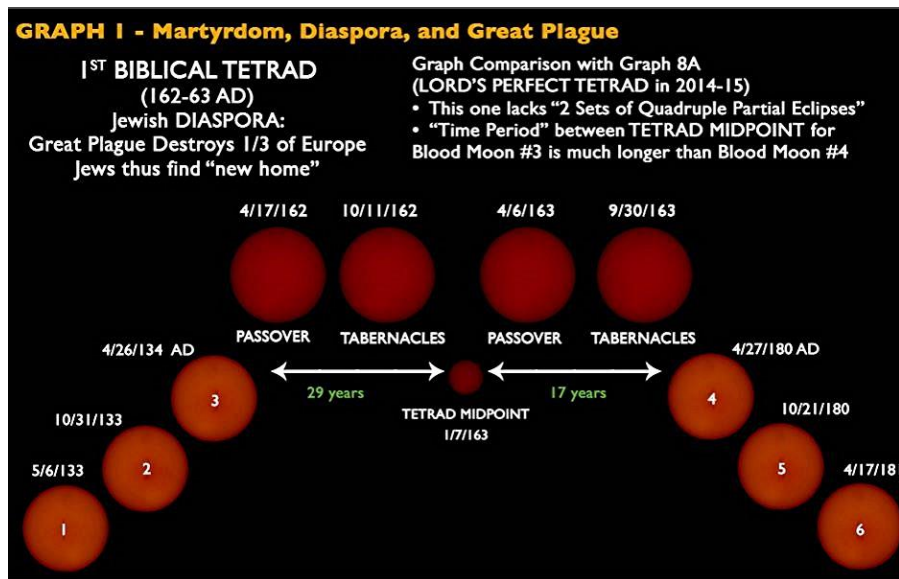
Time surrounding Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection (32-33 AD)



(This one does not count as a Tetrad; only the first 2 were full - the last 2 were partial.)

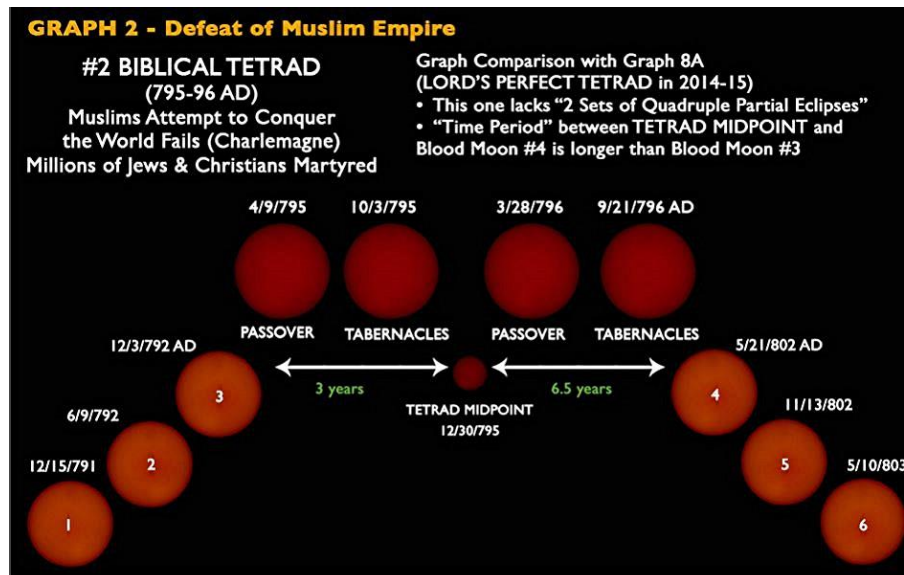
Passover - 4-14-32
 Tabernacles - 10-7-32
 Passover - 4-3-33
 Tabernacles - 9-27-33

1st 162-63 AD - Martyrdom, Diaspora, and Great Plague. The plague destroys 1/3 of Europe; Jews find "new home".



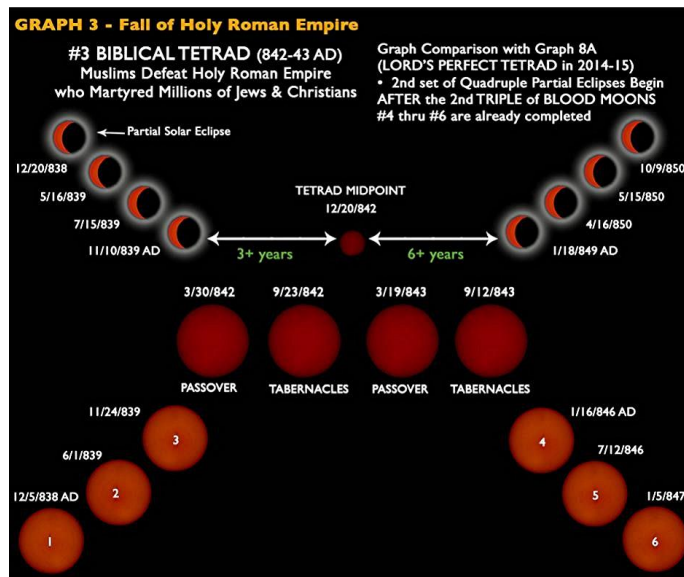
Passover - 4-17-162
 Tabernacles - 10-11-162
 Passover - 4-6-163
 Tabernacles - 9-30-163

2nd 795/796 AD - Muslims attempt to conquer the world failed (Charlemagne); millions of Jews and Christians slaughtered.



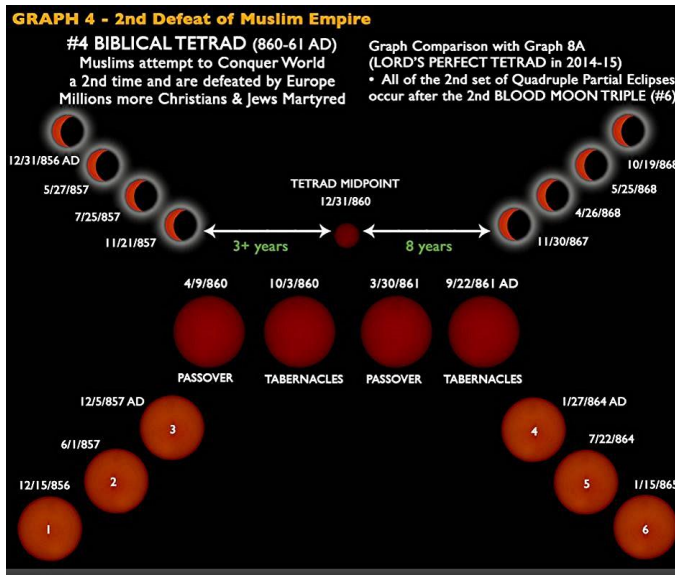
Passover - 4-9-795
 Tabernacles - 10-3-795
 Passover - 3-28-796
 Tabernacles - 9-21-796

3rd 842/843 AD - Muslims defeat Holy Roman Empire who martyred millions of Jews and Christians.



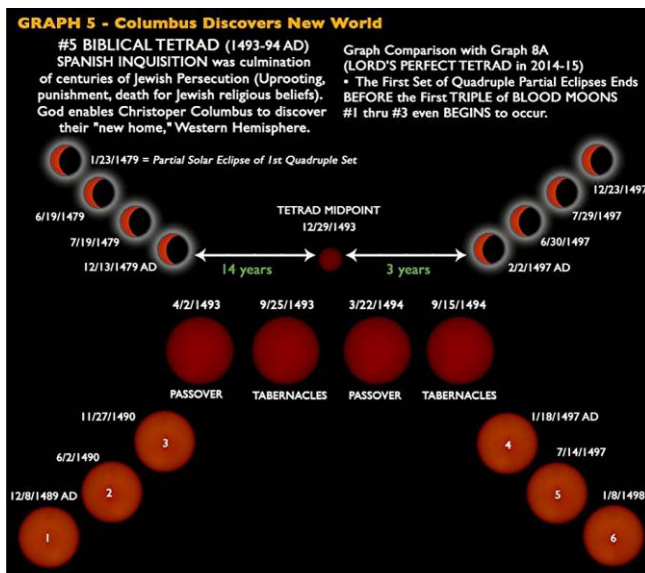
Passover - 3-30-842
 Tabernacles - 9-23-842
 Passover - 3-19-843
 Tabernacles - 9-12-843

4th 860/861 AD - Muslims attempt to conquer world a 2nd time and are defeated by Europe. Millions more Jews and Christians martyred.



Passover - 4-9-860
 Tabernacles - 10-3-860
 Passover - 3-30-861
 Tabernacles - 9-22-861

5th 1493/94 AD - The Spanish Inquisition was the culmination of centuries of Jewish persecution (uprooting, punishment, death). God enables Christopher Columbus to discover their "new home", America and the Western hemisphere



Passover - 4-2-1493
 Tabernacles - 9-25-1493
 Passover - 3-22-1494
 Tabernacles - 9-15-1494

The edict to expel the Jews from Spain came on April 29, 1492.

"In the same month in which their Majesties [Ferdinand and Isabella] issued the edict that all Jews should be driven out of the kingdom and its territories, in the same month they gave me the order to undertake with sufficient men my expedition of discovery to the Indies."

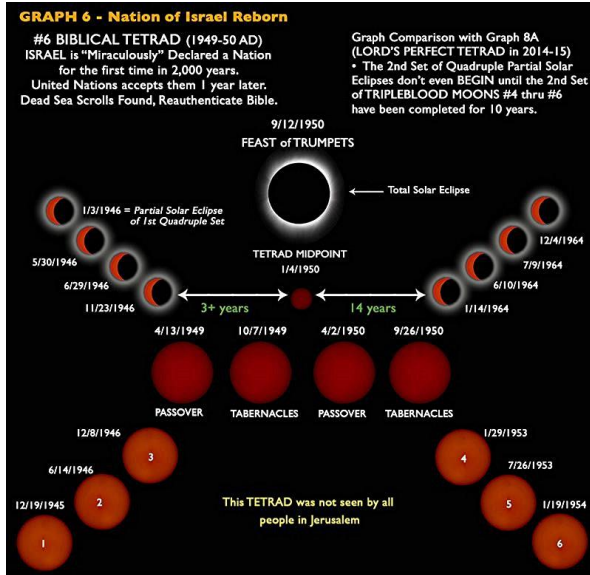
So begins Christopher Columbus's diary. The expulsion that Columbus refers to was so cataclysmic an event that ever since, the date 1492 has been almost as important in Jewish history as in American history. On July 30 of that year, the entire Jewish community, some 200,000 people, were expelled from Spain. We should also consider that America was discovered on this date; America later became a land of freedom for the Jewish people.

Tens of thousands of refugees died while trying to reach safety. In some instances, Spanish ship captains charged Jewish passengers exorbitant sums, then dumped them overboard in the middle of the ocean. In the last days before the expulsion, rumors spread throughout Spain that the fleeing refugees had swallowed gold and diamonds, and many Jews were knifed to death by brigands hoping to find treasures in their stomachs.

The Jews' expulsion had been the pet project of the Spanish Inquisition, headed by Father Tomas de Torquemada. Torquemada believed that as long as the Jews remained in Spain, they would influence the tens of thousands of recent Jewish converts to Christianity to continue practicing Judaism. Ferdinand and Isabella rejected Torquemada's demand that the Jews be expelled until January 1492, when the Spanish Army defeated Muslim forces in Granada, thereby restoring the whole of Spain to Christian rule. With their most important project, the country's unification, accomplished, the king and queen concluded that the Jews were expendable. On March 30, they issued the expulsion decree, the order to take effect in precisely four months. The short time span was a great boon to the rest of Spain, as the Jews were forced to liquidate their homes and businesses at absurdly low prices. Throughout those frantic months, Dominican priests actively encouraged Jews to convert to Christianity and thereby gain salvation both in this world and the next.

God caused Christopher Columbus to discover the "new world," which would eventually become America, a refuge to the Jewish people and all who were oppressed by tyrants and religious dictators around the world.

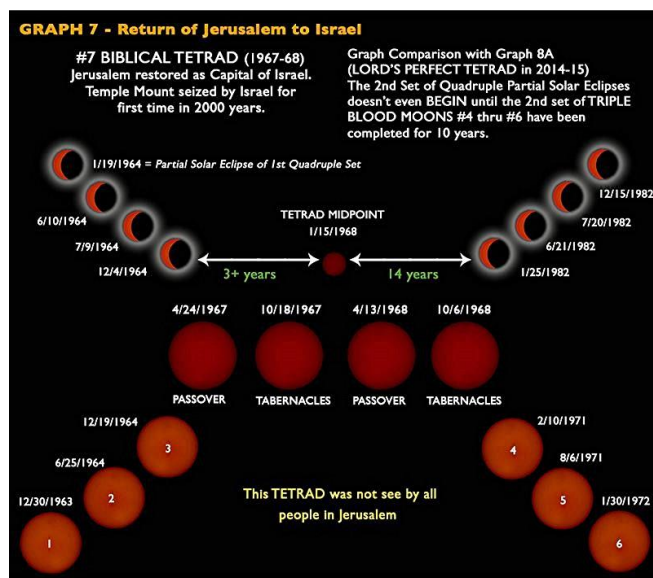
6th - 1949/50 AD - Israel's War of Independence



Passover - 4-13-1949
 Tabernacles - 10-7-1949
 Passover - 4-2-1950
 Tabernacles - 9-26-1950

Israel became a nation on May 14, 1948. They were attacked the next day on May 15, 1948. The war officially ended in January, 1949. As repeatedly prophesied in the Bible, Israel returned to her ancestral homeland. After declaring her independence on May 14, 1948 Israel was attacked by 6 Islamic nations which possessed 187 times more land than tiny Israel. Ill equipped Israel defeated the combined forces of Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, and gained territory. This was nothing less than miraculous.

7th - 1967/68 - Jerusalem restored as the capitol of Israel. Temple Mount seized by Israel for 1st time in 2,000 years.



Passover - 4-24-1967
 Tabernacles - 10-18-1967
 Passover - 4-13-1968
 Tabernacles - 10-6-1968

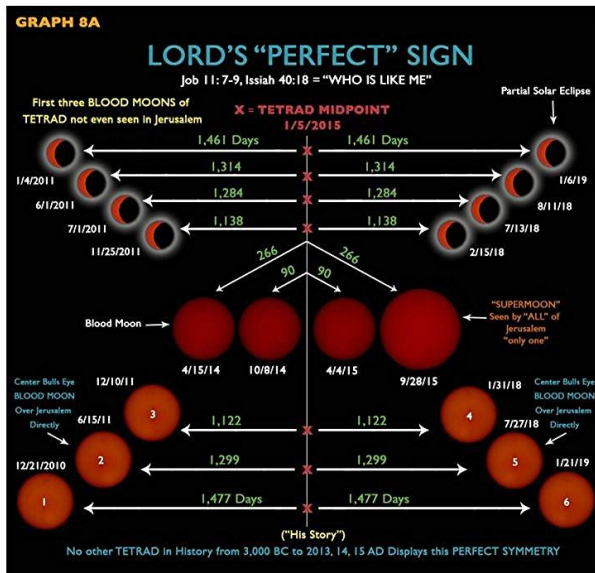
Israel was attacked on June 5, 1967. Jerusalem was recaptured on June 7, 1967.

NOTE: Between Israel's War of Independence (15 May 1948 - 10 March 1949) and the Six Day War (June 5 - 10, 1967), the Syrians constantly fired artillery shells from positions in the Golan Heights upon Israeli communities. Fatah began raids into Israeli territory in early 1965, with active support from Syria entering via Lebanon or Jordan. In April 1967, after Syria heavily shelled Israeli villages from the Golan Heights, and Israel shot down six Syrian Mig fighter planes and warned Syria against future attacks. Egypt began massing troops in the Sinai Peninsula on Israel's border on May 16, 1967 and expelled UN forces from Gaza and Sinai on May 19, 1967, and took up the UN's positions at the Straits of Tiran on May 19, 1967.

Israel reiterated declarations made in 1957 that any closure of the Straits would be considered an act of war, but Egypt closed the Straits to Israeli shipping on May 23, 1967. On June 5, 1967 Israel launched a large-scale surprise air strike that opened the Six-Day War. On the eve of the war, Egypt had massed about 100,000 troops in the Sinai, including 7 divisions (4 infantry, 2 armored and 1 mechanized), 4 independent infantry brigades and 4 independent armored brigades with 950 tanks, 1,100 APCs and over 1,000 artillery pieces. Syria's army had a total strength of 75,000 amassed along the Syrian border. Jordan's army had 55,000 troops and 300 tanks along it's border. In addition to Syria, Egypt and Jordan there were an additional assortment of weapons and men from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Kuwait, Tunisia, Sudan, and the PLO. It was Israel's 50,000 troops, 214,000 reserves, 300 combat aircraft and 800 tanks against the Arab's 547,000 troops, 957 combat aircraft, and 2,500 tanks. Israel captured the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the West Bank and Jerusalem from Jordan in just 6 days.]

It cannot be denied that the Tetrads of 1949 & 1950, and 1967 & 1968 were clearly associated with major historical events in the history of God's chosen earthly people, namely the re-establishment of Israel as a nation; and the re-capture of Jerusalem. The 1949 & 1950 Tetrad began on the first Passover after the historical event, and the 1967 & 1968 Tetrad occurred during the historical event! Another important fact is that there were also lunar eclipses on Passover & Tabernacles during 1948, but they were not total.

8. 2014/15 - This Tetrad ends on a Sabbatical year

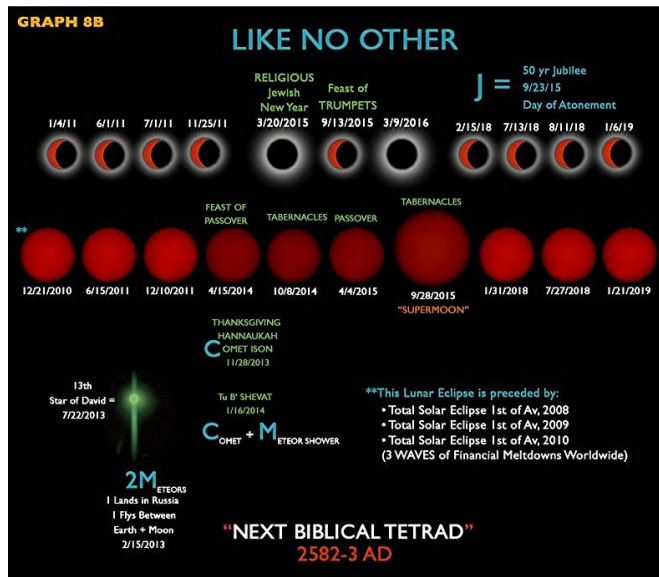


Passover - 4-15-2014
 Tabernacles - 10-8-2014
 Passover - 4-4-2015
 Tabernacles - 9-28-2015

Two additional Solar eclipses will occur in 2015, one on March 20, 2015, the day before the Religious New Year of 1 Nissan, and the other on 29 Elul, the day before the Civil New Year (Tishri 1) which is the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) and the day of release (Shemitah).

The above dates show the blood moons and solar eclipses before, during and after the Sabbatical year of 5775, the 7th year of rest, when the land rests in Israel. It runs from the Feast of Trumpets in 2014 (9/24/14) to the day before the Feast of Trumpets in 2015. Then the Feast of Trumpets of 5776 (9/14/15) is the Shemitah (the day of release when debts are to be forgiven). It was on the Shemitah of September 29, 2008 that the NYSE lost 777 points, and 7 years before that on September 17, 2001 when the market lost 684 points, both times setting record one day point losses, but this time the Shemitah is right in the middle of Tetrads that historically accompany great events for Israel or the Jewish people. God truly seems to be pointing to this general time period! I believe the Lord is telling us to repent!

Here's another perspective on this final Blood Moon Tetrad:



In light of the above, one can readily see the significance of successive Blood Moons in association with Jewish Feast Days. Is God Almighty telling us something? Skeptics and scoffers will denounce the discovery as mere coincidence, but the prophet Daniel informs us:

Daniel 12:10

Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

Peter warned:

2 Peter 3:3-4

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

So Let's Put This Into perspective. First, our Lord and Creator has planned from the very beginning to use signs in the Heaven as "harbingers" to grab our attention that something BIG and MIGHTY is about to happen. As I quoted earlier, God says,

Genesis 1:14-15

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: 15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

The Hebrew word for sign is "owth," meaning a signal, a warning, an omen is coming. The Hebrew word for season is "moade" meaning a divinely appointed time, a holy convocation (Leviticus 23:4).

Second, the historical trends for these Blood Moons each begin with tears, tragedy, sadness, darkness, and death for the Jewish people and they all end in victory and joy. Regarding Solar Eclipses, history has revealed judgment on the nations who attempt to harm Israel. (Genesis 12:3).

Third, (and this is absolutely fascinating): The probability of successfully predicting 4 consecutive Blood Moons to fall on these 2 Holy Days beginning with Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection to the 2014/2015 Blood Moons is indescribable - 1 chance in 1.85×10 to the 139th power. Yes, that is 139 consecutive zeroes. Our national debt of \$17 trillion has but 12 "little" zeroes.

This calculation totally excludes the inclusion of any probabilities associated with Solar Eclipses falling on the Lord's Holy Days, let alone their corresponding climactic world events they cause. This number defies the null hypothesis of all statistical probability. And why not, for who can challenge the power and glory of Almighty God? Visualizing this number must surely get all our attention of how profound these coming signs upon the earth are.

Now we look forward to witnessing not only these Blood Moons but also a display of several additional fascinating complementary signs more than any other Biblical Tetrad has ever had, some that have recently happened. This "Cosmic Countdown" is unprecedented.

My friends, our Lord is using this most special sign series to prepare this world to enter into a new zone, a new paradigm that just may possibly begin the End of the Age as we know it. (I cannot stress enough the Lord's word "before" at the beginning of this article from Joel 2:31). So why else would this prolific sign be upon us today? Can it be that this world has willfully turned away from our Creator? Might He be at that "critical point" where He's looking down on us through His window in Heaven with a tear in his eye (look at the world today)?

The historical precedence of events from the past 7 Tetrads is an already unequivocally established benchmark for the past 2,000 years since the times of Jesus, and those Blood Moons surrounding his death were most spectacular.

So What Future Worldly Events Does This Sign Foreshadow?

Well, first brace yourselves for this: NASA says there will be no more Biblical Tetrads for almost another 600 years, in the year 2582-83 AD, (you can look it up on NASA websites). Can you just imagine our world limping along for another 600 years as we know the world today?

In general the seeds under this umbrella are rampant today:

1. Nuclear proliferation and threats
2. Financial chaos derived from Government printing presses issuing free money
3. Unexplained animal, bird, and fish deaths and extinctions
4. Extreme weather patterns, excessive tornadoes, volcanoes, earthquakes
5. Deception, Immorality, Lawlessness, Loss of Family Values abound
6. Insecurity (NSA global spying)
7. Apostasy, and on and on and on

Are these not all prevalent today and in a big way? With the torrid pace of technology doubling every two and one half years (Daniel 12:4), is it any wonder that all these earthly signs are developing at warp speed in concert together?

Specifically, the prophesied major earthly events that are already primed to unfold are:

1. The Psalm 83 War where Israel's hostile border neighbors are completely decimated by Israel's Defense Forces (Ezekiel 37:10 and Isaiah 54:17 : "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper"). Can Iran, who says they will destroy Israel, hear this?? This war highlights today's daily news headliner, Damascus, Syria, the world's longest, largest, "continuing" city which will become a "ruinous heap....in one evening" (Isaiah 17:1,14). By the way, Israel has a population of 5.5 million and is the size of New Jersey. Israel's border neighbors are the size of ½ of the continental United States with a population of 170 million. (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank).
2. The Gog/Magog war where oil-hungry Russia, Iran, and Turkey are "lured" like a fish on the hook to come upon oil-rich Israel (Ezekiel 38:4). There 5/6 of their mighty military is supernaturally destroyed by God Almighty (Ezekiel 39:2).
3. Maybe the consummation of the currently ongoing Peace Process Treaty talks between Israel and the Palestinians will set the stage for all the other "dominoes" to fall. This process is wholly brokered by the United States and has been ongoing since July 29, 2013. It is scheduled to end April 29, 2014, the exact day of a Solar Eclipse (NASA). Also, all sides have agreed to stay involved for the duration and this has never ever happened before, (Daniel 9:27). That's right smack into the sweet spot of the Blood Moons. This Treaty, if signed, will recklessly violate God's eternal covenant with Abraham because Israel's land will be divided up (Genesis 12:3 and 15:18). This peace process is scheduled to last exactly 9 months. This is precisely the duration time of a pregnancy where a mother's birth pangs increase in frequency and intensity and are eventually "unstoppable". I mention this because, and most fittingly, there is a Bible Scripture in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 : "When they say Peace and Safety then sudden destruction comes upon them as travail upon a woman with child". (Also, Revelation 12:2). Very intriguing.
4. Or maybe it's the "loose cannon" in North Korea, maybe the Rapture, maybe the One World Order as we are so globally integrated with Facebook, Twitter, and cell phones galore. Or just maybe it's the End of the Age beginning with the 7-year Tribulation Period and culminating in the 2nd Coming of Jesus.

Don't Believe Me, Believe Your Bible

Nobody knows (and surely not me) which event will be triggered first. What we do know is that the Sun and the Moon are the Lord's *"Faithful and Silent Witnesses"* (Psalms 89:37). They will warn us first that this world is rapidly racing to the "Edge of Time". I strongly reiterate the word "before" in the scripture from Joel 2:31 at the beginning of this article. Please, do not believe me; believe your Bible. Then verify and judge for yourself your findings. 1 John 4:1 says *"....try the spirits whether they are from God because many false prophets are gone out into the world"*. This chapter merely attempts to reveal recognizable, confirmed and documented historical facts from NASA and Bible Scriptures of imminent prophetic events that are very well correlated with the coming Blood Moons. That simple. But only Almighty God knows for sure. Glory to God. He does not lie (Proverbs 30:5, Titus 1:2). This Blood Moon phenomenon is also not a coincidence; God does not do coincidences. His plan from the beginning has always been like a "Ring of Steel", totally set and unalterable.

We Are Truly A Privileged Generation

You, nor I, nor our parents nor our grandparents,... nor Adam & Eve, (yes; even Adam & Eve), have ever seen or will ever see again such a magnificent perfectly synchronized and orderly alignment of Heavenly signs. This Cosmic Countdown - so divinely fashioned by our Creator - most assuredly tells us that He is literally screaming that we are approaching the "Edge of Time", as he appears to no longer be "first" in today's world. Jesus warns us in Matthew 24:34 : *"Verily I say unto you. This generation shall not pass till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"*

Challenging times are now here as these Blood Moons are upon us. However, they will culminate in a beautiful ending, our Lord tells us so. He's Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, compassionate and in full control. Billions of people will witness these phenomenal signs around the world, specifically the Western Hemisphere as per NASA. How privileged is that?

As In The Days Of Noah

Yet there are some who will witness these signs and say they are pretty, romantic, no big deal. Others will say they are scare tactics revved up by Bible prophecy junkies. Others will simply say, "I'm not interested, I'll go watch TV."

Well this is precisely the attitude people had in the days of Noah, and then it began to rain, and rain, and rain... (Luke 17:27).

On the next page you will find a chart correlating these coming special Lunar Tetrads with the applicable Jewish Feast Days. You should take note of the solar eclipses that, combined with the blood moons, are possibly a fulfillment of Joel 2:31.

Joel 2:31

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Correlation of Blood Moons With Feast Days Torah Calendar

Feast	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Passover	4-15-14	4-4-15	3-23-16	4-12-17	4-1-18	3-22-19	4-8-20	3-28-21	4-16-22	4-5-23	3-25-24	4-13-25
Unl. Bread	4-16-14	4-5-15	3-24-16	4-13-17	4-2-18	3-23-19	4-9-20	3-29-21	4-17-22	4-6-23	3-26-24	4-14-25
First Fruits	4-18-14	4-7-15	3-26-16	4-15-17	4-4-18	3-25-19	4-11-20	3-31-21	4-19-22	4-8-23	3-28-24	4-16-25
Pentecost*	6-5-14	5-26-15	5-15-16	6-3-17	5-23-18	5-13-19	5-30-20	5-19-21	6-7-22	5-27-23	5-16-24	6-4-25
Trumpets	9-25-14	9-14-15	9-2-16	9-22-17	9-11-18	9-1-19	9-19-20	9-9-21	9-28-22	9-17-23	9-4-24	9-24-25
Atonement	10-3-14	9-23-15	9-11-16	10-1-17	9-20-18	9-10-19	9-28-20	9-18-21	10-7-22	9-26-23	9-13-24	10-3-25
Tabernacles	10-8-14	9-28-15	9-16-16	10-6-17	9-25-18	9-15-19	10-3-20	9-23-21	10-12-22	10-1-23	9-18-24	10-8-25

CHAPTER THIRTY

Can We Know the Day or Hour of His Coming?

A doctrine which most fundamental prophecy teachers propagate is that no one can know the day or the hour of Jesus' coming.

I believe this possibly applies only to when the Lord comes to rapture His church. Apparently, we can know the day of the beginning of Daniel's Seventieth Week - at least which exact date each year that it might possibly occur. But the coming of the Lord for His church does not have to be part of the seven-year tribulation period.

But we should consider that *someone* would know this exact date, for it is written:

Amos 3:7

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

So perhaps we can know the time of His physical return; but not necessarily the time He comes to rapture His church. I believe we can know the start of Daniel's 70th week; whether or not this coincides with the rapture remains to be seen.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Daniel's 70th Week and the 75 Days

The Prophet Daniel was given an outline of the entire future history of the Jewish people as consisting of "seventy weeks".

Daniel 9:24

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

This prophecy was divided into three segments. The first two segments totaling 69 weeks were fulfilled at Jesus' first coming - threescore and two (62) + seven (7) = 69 weeks. At the end of these 69 weeks, Jesus was "cut off" (crucified for our sins.)

Daniel 9:25-26

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.....

At this point (the end of the 69 weeks), God's prophetic clock stopped, leaving one week - "Daniel's Seventieth Week" - to be fulfilled. It should be noted that a "week" in God's prophecy consists of 7 years in each week; therefore, the entire prophecy covers 490 years, and 483 years have already been fulfilled. A year in God's prophetic timetable consists of 360 days (for one example, compare the 42 months of Rev. 11:2 and 13:5 to the 1,260 days of Rev. 11:3 and 12:6.)

Daniel describes this seven year period as follows:

Daniel 9:27

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

So there remains 7 years of tribulation totaling 2,520 days (7 x 360 = 2,520). The Book of Revelation divides this 2,520 days into two equal time periods of 42 months each, or 1,260 days each. Daniel confirms this division as the "midst of the week" above, commonly known to Bible scholars as "Mid-Tribulation", a point exactly in the middle of the 2,520 days.

Daniel further adds to this 70th week three mysterious time periods:

Daniel 8:13-14

Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Daniel 12:11

And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

Daniel 12:12

Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

The 2,300 days has to do with when the daily sacrifice in the 3rd Temple begins.

The 75 days period we are specifically concerned with in this chapter is calculated as follows: 1,335 - 1,260 = 75 (the Tribulation period in Revelation is divided into two 1,260 days periods (Rev. 11:3, 12:6.)

Thus we have "**Daniel's 70th Week and the 75 Days**", which is outlined in the proposed chart by that name presented at the end of this chapter. These various periods of days are explained in this chart.

There are three remaining Feasts of the Lord to be fulfilled; these fulfillments will occur at the *end* of the Seventieth Week. The aforementioned chart outlines the possible beginning date of Daniel's Seventieth Week as 9-30-2019. I stress the word "possible", as this is at best only speculation.

The Key to End-Time Prophecy

For many years I have paid close attention to the subject of end-time prophecy, as have no doubt many of you. Not only have I done my own study but I have attempted to understand others who have offered their understanding and insight into the subject. I have concluded that most prophecy teachers - those who advocate their proper way to handle the subject - think that they are smarter on the subject than the Messiah Himself.

A multitude of these prophecy teachers focus in on a variety of things, saying that those items are the key elements to understanding the end-time prophecies. It varies from the pretribulation rapture of the church to signs of distress in the world's socio-political order or the world's economic chaos. I can understand that the collapse of the U.S. Dollar will seem almost the "end of the world" for some Americans, and I can understand that social disorder and change have dire consequences to the good order of the community; but all of these are just the "beginning of sorrows", not the sign of the end of the ages and beginning of the Messianic era.

So why do people chase after things that are not true *cause and effect* for the end of the ages? Every one of the signs cited by those proclaiming the end is about to happen have existed previously in the world's history and, in many cases, were much worse than those happening today. It wasn't the end of the world then.

Jesus spoke directly to this question. He warned us of false predictions and of numerous troubles being interpreted as signs of the end. So, let's set aside all the distracting confetti of the end-times, even if it comes from Christian sources, and refer directly to what He had to say was the sign of the end.

The key prophecy cited by the Messiah that marks the end of the age and the start of the 3 ½ year Great Tribulation is called the *Abomination of Desolation*. It is the key prophecy that leads to the "Day of the LORD" and finally the return of the Messiah to establish His kingdom from Jerusalem. It is a prophecy that originates from Daniel and cited by the Messiah Himself when answering questions about the end of the age and His return.

The *Abomination of Desolation* prophecy has two parts. First, an altar must be atop the temple mount with the daily sacrifice being presented each morning and evening. The daily sacrifice is called the *tamid* offering, which means "continual." It is the first offering made after the altar is dedicated and it is first and last offering for each daily service.

Exodus 29:38-43

Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually.³⁹ The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even:⁴⁰ And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering.⁴¹ And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. ⁴² This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. ⁴³ And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.

This commandment is also repeated in Numbers 28:3-8. As long as these morning and evening lambs are presented, the LORD recognizes that altar as His table. However, if for any reason the morning or evening lamb is prevented from being offered, the altar immediately ceases to be proper before the LORD. He no longer recognizes it as suitable for worshipping Him. It must be torn down, a new one built, and it must be dedicated with bulls and goats for seven days to begin the daily *tamid* sacrifice again.

According to the prophecy the altar will be in the 3rd Jewish Temple to be built in modern Jerusalem in the near future. This daily sacrifice will be stopped by the Antichrist. This is the first part of the Abomination of Desolation.

The second part of the Abomination of Desolation involves a statue or image of the Antichrist to be set up in the the Holy of Holies in the Temple. The *false prophet* (so named in Revelation) will somehow miraculously enable the statue to speak. The false prophet will then call upon mankind to bow down before the Antichrist and worship him and the statue. The day that the image is set up on the temple mount "*standing in the holy place*" is the second part of the prophecy and cited by Jesus.

Matthew 24:15

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Daniel's prophecy reveals this:

Daniel 8:11-12

Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12 And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.

Daniel 9:27

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Forces from him (the Antichrist) will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.

Daniel 11:31

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

Daniel 12:11

And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

Those in Judea begin to flee when the image is set up. Their day count is 1,260 days to the end of the tribulation.

Revelation 12:6

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

There is also a 30 day difference between the 1,290 days and the 1,260 days of the tribulation.

Daniel 12:11-12

And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

Jesus said there would be total darkness immediately after the tribulation. This 30 day difference seems to be this period of time.

Matthew 24:29-30

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The period for mourning was established as 30 days at the death of both Moses and Aaron:

Numbers 20:29

And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

Deuteronomy 34:8

And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

A great trumpet will sound, and all the living Jews will be gathered to Jerusalem.

Matthew 24:29-31

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 **And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.***

Isaiah 11:11-12

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again **the second time** to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. 12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, **and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.***

The fall holidays of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and Tabernacles (Sukkot) will be the focus of the days immediately after the Tribulation. *Atonement* signifies God's cleansing the Temple. *Tabernacles* is the "Season of Joy" where we are commanded to "rejoice before the LORD." In fact, the prophet Zechariah says that in the Millennial Kingdom, Tabernacles will be celebrated *first*, as opposed to *last* now. Tabernacles will be the first Feast to be celebrated in the new millennium.

Zechariah 14:16

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

So I present the following possible scenario (this is only speculation based on Scripture): Daniel's 70th Week begins on 12-24-2019. (Refer to chart at the end of this chapter.)

The Great Tribulation

The Great Tribulation (the last 3 1/2 years) begins first with the altar shutdown and the setting in place the "abomination of desolation" on 6-5-2023, and this starts the 1,260 day count to the end of Daniel's 70th week. Those in Judea who see the image set up and heed the warning of Jesus flee into the Judean wilderness east of the temple mount. They are preserved for 1,260 days to the end of the Great Tribulation. There is a period of 75 days (30 days + 45 days) immediately following the Great Tribulation. The Great Tribulation will end on 9-22-2025. During this 30 day period following, the world is in total darkness and in mourning; at the end of this 30 days, on 10-22-2025, the Day of Atonement, the Abomination of Desolation will be removed from the Holy Place and the Temple cleansed. To refresh your memory, the interior of the Temple is divided into two parts:

- (1) The Holy Place, which contains the Table of Shewbread, the Candlesticks (Menorah), and the Altar of Incense.
- (2) The Most Holy Place, which contains the Ark of the Covenant atop which is the Mercy Seat. This can only be entered once a year by the High Priest, and only with a blood offering.

The Temple will be cleansed (by the Lord Himself) at the end of this 30-day period by the removal of the Abomination of Desolation on 10-2-2025 in our scenario. A more detailed explanation follows.

Daniel 12:11

And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

What Daniel tells us in this verse is that the abomination of desolation will remain in place for 1,290 days, during which time there will be no daily sacrifices offered in the Temple. Each half of the seventieth week lasts for exactly 1,260 days, or forty-two months. The seventieth week itself expires 1,260 days after its midpoint, so Daniel 12:11 simply explains that the abomination will remain in place throughout the second half of the seventieth week and for thirty days beyond it.

Jesus Christ has to return at the end of the seventieth week, because only He can provide the necessary conditions for it to end. Recall that there are six things that are completed with the end of the entire prophecy of the seventy weeks, according to Daniel 9:24:

Daniel 9:24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

- (1) to finish transgression
- (2) to put an end to sin
- (3) to atone for wickedness
- (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness
- (5) to seal up vision and prophecy
- (6) and to anoint the most holy."

These things could not be completed with the Antichrist's kingdom still present on the earth, or with Jesus Christ still in heaven. The Antichrist's kingdom ends with the end of the seventieth week. He is given power only for forty-two months, not for forty-three. By the same token, Jesus Christ must be in control of Jerusalem and the Temple in order for the entire seventy week prophecy to be complete. Jesus Christ will cleanse and anoint the most holy room when he physically returns on 10-2-2025.

The entire process beginning with the daily sacrifice being stopped to the end of the Judgment of the Sheep and goats is 3 ½ years plus 75 days. The end of this 75 days is 12-5-2025.

As noted, the judgment of every individual remaining on the face of the earth will begin on 10-23-2025. Such judgment will commence "when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of His glory" (Mat 25:31), which would be the day after 10-22-2025. Said judgment lasts for a total of 45 days, which would end on 12-5-2025. thus accounting for the 75 days, totaling 1,335 days from the Abomination of Desolation.

Daniel 12:12

Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

When Daniel says that those who reach the end are "blessed" he was referring to those who are judged worthy to enter the kingdom after the judgment of the "sheep and goats" has ended. Jesus said of these declared-righteous survivors:

Matthew 25:34

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Details of the Abomination of Desolation

Let's look again to the first part of the Abomination of Desolation, the key sign we were told to look for by the Messiah. If you take a pulse of the average believer today about the building of the altar to satisfy the prerequisite requirement of the Abomination of Desolation, they generally react in a negative manner saying that "altars were done away with; Jesus was the final sacrifice." I have found that most believers, even pastors and leaders, are not aware of the reason for altars and why God used them in the past. It follows then that they are generally confused as to why God would use an altar for the key sign of the Abomination of Desolation. Some have argued that "*setting up an altar* is itself an abomination" as opposed to it being shut down.

The altar on the temple mount is God's ownership symbol of the earth, with homage being served by the daily sacrifices as Israel recognizes that God is the King and Owner of the earth. Unbelievers do not want to believe that God is sovereign and has any influence in their lives, and accordingly they will find worldly reasons to protest the establishment of the altar. The Antichrist, who believes he is the savior of the world, will reject any sovereignty of God and His ownership symbol of earth. Hence, the climatic end of the ages.

When end-of-the-world prophecies don't happen, most people adjust quickly and return to their daily routine with some wondering what happened and others laughing it off. It dulls the ears of everyone hearing the *real* end-time prophecies. We live in such a day that has many believers "dull of hearing" about any end-time prophecy. Any suggestion that the real sign of the end is an altar in Jerusalem on top of temple mount being shut down will be immediately be dismissed as more nonsense. The stage is set for the true prophecies of the end just as the Scripture said:

2 Peter 3:3

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

Timothy 3:1-7

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

There are certainly compelling reasons why many prophecy teachers and students believe we are the last generation. Jesus said that the last generation would not pass away until all is accomplished. This means that the true end-times prophecies and signs occur within a single generation. One of the most compelling end-time prophecies that mark the final generation is the re-establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The capture of Jerusalem on 6-7-1967 also adds more compelling evidence to this conclusion.

But such compelling reasons should be obvious. Most of the end-time prophecies require Jews to be back in Israel and Jerusalem is the seat of controversy for the world. We certainly have that in this generation. There are other signs and prophetic elements as well, including the *dividing of the land* and the *covenant with death and hell*. These are perpetually in the headlines in negotiating the Middle East peace process. The title of the Oslo Accords is the "Peace and Security Agreement." The prophets say that while they are saying "peace and security" sudden destruction (the Great Tribulation) will come. This is not a prophetic prediction of future events; but the counting of days is part of the prophecy, and looking for the Abomination of Desolation is exactly what the Messiah told the disciples (and us) to do.

For the moment, let's weigh the possibility that Daniel's Seventieth Week does actually begin on 12-24-2019. First, the altar must be built and the first sacrifice offered on 8-10-2020 (see chart). While it is true that there are Jews in Jerusalem waiting to build that altar, and the materials for the altar have also been collected and stored in Jerusalem, the temple mount is under Palestinian control and they are not going to permit such a construction. That means that the political landscape of the temple mount must rapidly change. How could that happen?

A war in the Middle East involving the Palestinians could be one way (Psalm 83 or Gog/Magog?) Israel would thus gain control by military conquest. This possibility is not as improbable as you might think. Tensions in Israel and with their neighbors are overwhelmingly serious right now. And there could be another way as well. The Palestinians now claim to have a state and are proclaiming all Jewish settlements as illegal in the West Bank area (this includes the old city of Jerusalem). The Jews could just announce an annexation of the temple mount and take a portion of the area. They may take the ground where the Dome of the Rock sits, or they could easily take control of a small portion to the north of the Dome and begin a shared use of the upper mount below the Kotel (Western Wall). Or God could cause the destruction of the Dome of the Rock with an earthquake, or perhaps through war. Given the "tit for tat" going on right now over settlement building plans and international condemnations, this is not beyond the possibility either.

I believe that these days will soon be upon us. Will they be in 2019, a year later, or five years later? We won't know until the Covenant with Death and Hell (the 7-year covenant the Antichrist makes with *many*), is signed (or perhaps re-established or confirmed) and the building of the new Temple commences. Then and only then will we fully understand these prophecies. This is what the Apostle Peter spoke of in his letters to the brethren.

1 Peter 1:13

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

In Peter's final letter, just before his own death, he reminded us that the prophetic word we have been given is not a cleverly devised story of deception. He testified directly to laying hands on the Messiah and hearing God's own voice declare Jesus to be His Son. And as a consequence, Peter declared the prophecies of the Messiah were true. He concluded it this way, alluding to something even greater to happen to us:

2 Peter 1:19

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Trying to understand the prophecies today is like trying to spy out a dark room with a single candle for light. We move from one place to another, shining the light and trying to remember what we saw before and compare it with what we see now. We do the same by studying the events of the past to catch the gleam of prophetic themes and patterns to understand the days and times we now live in. But the Apostle Peter says that at the end, the light of the new day (the beginning of God's kingdom on earth) will shine forth with understanding that far exceeds the written prophecies. We will see the events for ourselves and the understanding of our times will flood in like sunlight filling the entire room with light. It is a striking comparison!

It will be nothing short of amazing when the altar is shut down and the image is set up on the temple mount as well. Then all of the speculations and alternate prophetic theories will evaporate. The events of the day will be so compelling that we will be left with the realization that God's word is true. This is what the prophet Jeremiah was referring to.

Jeremiah 23:20

The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

Perhaps this is why the Messiah injected that special comment while explaining the Abomination of Desolation as the sign of the end.

Matthew 24:15

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Didn't Jesus say that many would not understand what was happening, and compared the end-times to the days of Noah and that judgment?

Matthew 24:39

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Even the prophet Daniel didn't understand the prophecies of the Abomination of Desolation and the end. When he questioned the LORD about this lack of understanding, he was told that he would not understand it, that the understanding would come in the last days, in the days of the Abomination of Desolation.

Daniel 12:8-10

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

If these things begin to happen on 12-24-2019, will we understand the outcome of these events better than the prophet who gave them to us? Will we see and understand, while others will reject the prophetic signs? Will we have the insight to understand what is happening? Perhaps not all Christians will.

Here are more reasons why I propose that 12-24-2019 is a likely date for the start of Daniel's Seventieth Week:

1. It is an obscure day, an "hour that you think not" (Mat. 24:44).
2. The Blood Moon Sextad is a clear warning of something following the final Blood Moon of 9-16-2016.
3. All the applicable time periods of both Daniel and Revelation are accounted for using this start date (2,300, 1,290, 1,335, 1,260).
4. The remaining 3 Fall Feasts will be fulfilled on their exact dates.

Please note that the rapture is perhaps a separate Christian event not necessarily tied to the Jewish Feasts.

And don't be taken in by the error of many that the two witnesses prophesy in the *last* half of the tribulation. Revelation clearly shows there are 1,260 days of Jewish persecution (the time of Jacob's trouble) *after* the two witnesses are slain by the Antichrist (Rev. 12:6). And think about it: at the end of the tribulation, the world is in utter shambles and devastation - this will hardly be a time of rejoicing and giving presents to one another (Rev. 11:10).

Revelation 11:10

10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

The following chart shows a proposed beginning of Daniel's Seventieth to be on 12-24-2019, and the date of the first Temple Sacrifice to be on 8-10-2020.

There is a strange twist presented in this chart that perhaps no one else has considered.

I believe the 4th Trumpet judgment occurs just at mid-trib. This is God's response to the Abomination of Desolation which has just occurred at this point.

Revelation 8:12

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

The only way this can happen is that the speed of the earth's rotation will be increased so that instead of 24-hour days it will shift to 16-hour days, (by one-third). Thus the "days will be shortened", as Jesus prophesied. Obviously, this will bring enormous distress upon the earth physically.

Matthew 24:22

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

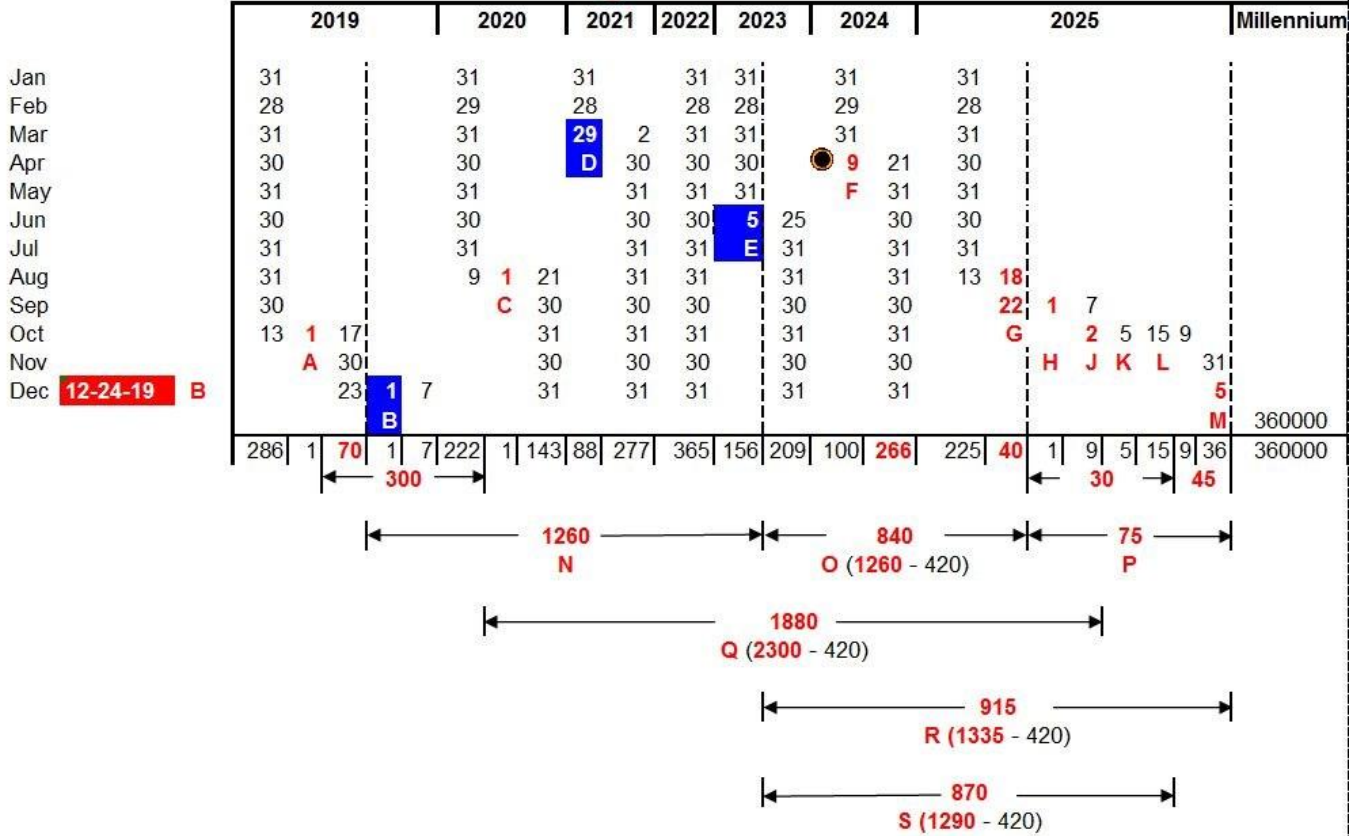
One third of 1,260 days is 420 days. This reduces the second half of the Tribulation from 1,260 days to 840 days. So all the prophecies in Daniel concerning 1,260, 1,290, 1,335, and 2,300 days will be reduced by 420 days each to 840, 870, 915, 1,880 days, respectively. Thus the prophecies in Daniel will be fulfilled by 16-hour days, but the actual time that has passed concerning the earth's orbit around the sun will be 420 days less.

The earth's rotation will be restored to 24-hour days and 360-day years at the end of the 7-year Tribulation.

I know this is rather hard to wrap your mind around. But all the prophecies are still fulfilled. The following chart reflects these adjustments.

Daniel's Seventieth Week

Begins on 12-24-19



- 12-6-17** Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital 1:07 pm which was 9:07 pm Jerusalem time 12-7-17 **Chelsea's birthday**
12-6-17 to 6-5-23 = **66** months.
- A 10-14-19** **First Fruits Rapture**; 10-15-19 to 12-24-19 = **70** days.
Feast of Tabernacles; date of Simon's conception; **10-14-1940** to 7-7-1941 (Simon's birthdate) = **266** days.
 Simon enters his **80th year** from conception; (Moses was called in his **80th** year);
*Jos 1:5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: **as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee**:*
- B 12-24-19** Start of Tribulation; Two Witnesses appear; 1st Seal opened - Rider on the White Horse appears;
 Clock starts ticking exactly 6 years from sign in the heavens to Simon in Utah on 12-24-13;
12 x 24 = 288 = 144 x 2; 3rd day of Hanukkah; 2-27-18 (**Talece's 33rd birthday**) to **12-24-19 = 666** days.
2-27-15 Word from the Lord - Exo 34:10 -
 Exo 34:10 And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth,
 nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.
 Jesus conceived 12-24-4 BC; **12-24-18** is 4 years from the **birth of Avalee** on 12-24-15;
12-24-16 was the **24th day of the 9th month**; **12-24-19** is 3 years after.
*Hag 2:18 Consider now from this day and upward, from the **four and twentieth day of the ninth month***
- C 8-10-20** Date of 1st sacrifice in new Temple; 10 years after Simon began his fast on **8-10-10**.
8-10-20 to 10-2-25 (Day of Atonement) = **1,880** days (2,300 - 420).
- D 3-29-21** **Harvest Rapture**; 1 day after **10th Feast Day** beginning **10-14-19**; **6th Seal opened**; **Rufina's birthday**;
10-14-19 to **3-29-21** = 532 days = **266 x 2**; nearly **18** months;
*Act 18:11 And he (Simon) continued there **a year and six months**, teaching the word of God among them.*
*Rev 2:10 ...behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and **ye shall have tribulation ten days**:*
Mat 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.
- E 6-5-23** **Mid-Tribulation Rapture**. (1Th 4:15-17) **4th Trumpet** - earth's rotation increases from 24 hour days to 16 hour days.
 Abomination of Desolation - Dan 9:27; Two Witnesses slain; see **420** below.
 6-5-07 prophecy; 6-5-67 start of **6-Day War**; appropriate that Israel's **final war** begins this day.
Rev 8:12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon,
- F 4-9-24** Total eclipse over the USA from east to west. **8 years** from Sharon's funeral on **4-9-16**;

- G 9-22-25** **Partial solar eclipse**; end of 7 year Tribulation (which was shortened to 2,100 days: 2,520 - 420 = 2,100);
 7th Vial - earth's rotation restored to 24-hour days and 360 day years. which causes **great earthquake**.
*Rev 16:18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a **great earthquake**,
 such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.*


H 9-23-25 Final Rapture of the Elect; final fulfillment of **Feast of Trumpets**. **Alex's birthday**.

Mat 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

8 years from Rev. 12 sign in the stars on 9-23-17; **Fall Equinox**

1-1-25 to 9-23-25 = 266 days. 266 is the number of days of gestation period for humans

● 9-28-15 (blood moon) to **9-23-19** = 4 years of the Parable of the Fig Tree.

● 1-21-19 Blood Moon to **9-23-19** = 246 days = 5904 hours = **144** x 41.

● 7-16-19 Blood Moon to **9-23-19** = **70** days;

9-23 backwards is 3-29; 7-7-20 to **3-29-21 (Rufina's birthday)** = **266** days.

9-23-25 is the eighth day from 9-16-25; day Jesus was circumcized in 3BC

J 10-2-25 Final Day of Atonement;

K 10-7-25 Final Feast of Tabernacles

L 10-22-25 End of 30 day mourning period; 8-10-20 to 10-22-25 = 1,880 days = 2,550 - 420;

Mat 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

M 12-5-25 Last day of Tribulation; next day is **12-6-25**; 8 years earlier on **12-6-17** Trump recognized Jerusalem as Capital of Israel.

N 1,260 **1,260** days = 42 months = 3 1/2 biblical years;

Rev 12:6 ...that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

O 840 **1,260 - 420 = 840 days; length of Antichrist's rule; 840/1,260 = .6666666 - number of Antichrist.**

Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

P 75 **1,335 (Dan 12:12) - 1,260 = 75 days.**

Q 1,880 **2,300 days (Dan 8:14) - 420 = 1,880 days.**

Dan 12:12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

R 915 **1335 (Dan 12:12) - 420 = 915 days**

Dan 12:12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

S 870 **1,290 (Dan 12:11) - 420 = 870 days.**

Dan 12:11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

Conclusion to Daniel's Seventieth Week and the 75 Days

Consider the following scriptural facts about His second coming:

1. It must be sometime in this century. Jesus said in Luke:

Luke 21:29-32

And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; 30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. 32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

The fig tree budded forth on May 14, 1948 when Israel once again became a nation. So Jesus must come before the last person to be alive on that date dies. Let's be liberal and say that someone born on that date dies 120 years later on May 14, 2068. So by that date Jesus must have already come.

2. Jesus must fulfill the remaining 3 fall feasts on the exact day of the feast. There are 7 Feasts the Jews were commanded to observe. The first four spring feasts were fulfilled at Jesus' first coming: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Pentecost. They were all fulfilled on the exact day of each Feast. The pattern has been set: therefore, the remaining 3 fall feasts (Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles) will be fulfilled on the exact day of each feast.

3. They will be heralded by signs in the heavens. God said the sun and the moon are to be for signs:

Genesis 1:14

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

There is hardly a more significant event God will herald than Jesus' Second Coming. There have now been eight blood moon tetrads since Jesus' first coming. Each of them heralded something significant to happen to the nation of Israel (see book). The pattern has been set. There are no more blood moon tetrads this century. Therefore, since Jesus must come this century (1 above), this current blood moon tetrad we have recently experienced must herald the imminent return of Jesus. Also, take note that this current blood moon tetrad is the eighth in the series; eight is the number of resurrection.

4. The starting date of 12-24-2019 is the next date that fulfills all the prophecy requirements of Daniel and Revelation and still occurs after the final Blood Moon of the Blood Moon Sextad we have recently experienced. The dates of the fulfillment of the remaining 3 fall feasts must satisfy the 1,260 days of Revelation (Rev 11:3, 12:6, et al), and also account for the 2,300 days, the 1,335 days, and the 1,290 days of Daniel.

5. No man can know the day or the hour? I believe this applies only to when the Lord comes to rapture His church. Apparently, we can calculate the day or the hour of the beginning of Daniel's Seventieth Week. But the coming of the Lord for His church does not have to be part of the seven-year tribulation period. And in this case, I believe the Firstfruits Rapture will occur on 10-14-2019, but we really don't know for sure.

Furthermore, that *someone* would know this exact date must be in accordance with Scripture:

Amos 3:7

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

What other more significant secret can there be but the return of our Lord?

In conclusion, I have given the above reasons for the next possible starting date of the Tribulation period to be 12-24-2019. At present, I can see no other alternative. But just because I can't see it, it doesn't mean my date is infallible. It only means that if there is another date, I can't see it. I am limited by a fallen, imperfect and finite intellect. If such is the case, then perhaps at least the foregoing chart can serve as a model for a future date.

Please keep in mind that this beginning date, and the chart expressing such, is only speculation.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

The Chronological Order of the Book of Revelation

Some believe that the 7 seals, 7 trumpets and 7 vials of the Book of Revelation ("Revelation" is singular; i.e. It is one *continuous* revelation) rather than repetitious descriptions of the same events. Some teachers say that the 7 years of tribulation are almost completed by the time of the opening of the sixth seal (Rev 6:12). This is absolutely false. A thorough study of the Book of Revelation shows that it is in chronological order with parenthetical portions providing detail. Here I will give a rationale for the chronological order of the Book of Revelation.

Phrases showing chronology

The following phrases demonstrate that the Book of Revelation is to be understood chronologically:

1. "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Rev 1:19).
2. "After this [the Church Age] ... the first voice which I heard ... said, ... I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." (Rev 4:1).
3. "I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals" (Rev 6:1)
4. "the second seal" (Rev 6:3).
5. "the third seal" (Rev 6:5).
6. "the fourth seal" (Rev 6:7).
7. "the fifth seal" (Rev 6:9).
8. the sixth seal (Rev 6:12).
9. "after these things" (Rev 7:1).
10. "after this" (Rev 7:9).
11. "when he had opened the seventh seal ... I saw the seven angels ... and to them were given seven trumpets." (Rev 8:1-2).
12. "Woe, woe, woe" (Rev 8:13).
13. "the first angel sounded" (Rev 8:7).
14. "the second angel sounded" (Rev 8:8).

15. "the third angel sounded" (Rev 8:10).
16. "the fourth angel sounded" (Rev 8:12).
17. "the fifth angel sounded" (Rev 9:1).
18. "One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter" (Rev 9:12).
19. "the sixth angel sounded" (Rev 9:13).

(Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 are parenthetical chapters which give details about the middle of the Tribulation.)

20. "The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly." (Rev 11:14).
21. "the seventh angel sounded" (Rev 11:15).
22. "... Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you ... he hath but a short time." (Rev 12:12).
23. "the seven last plagues" (Rev 15:1).
24. "after that" (Rev 15:5).
25. "the first [angel] went, and poured out his vial" (Rev 16:2).
26. "the second angel poured out his vial" (Rev 16:3).
27. "the third angel poured out his vial" (Rev 16:4).
28. "the fourth angel poured out his vial" (Rev 16:8).
29. "the fifth angel poured out his vial" (Rev 16:10).
30. "the sixth angel poured out his vial" (Rev 16:12).
31. "the seventh angel poured out his vial" (Rev 16:17).
32. "after these things" (Rev 18:1).
33. "after these things" (Rev 19:1).

The First Plagues and the Last Plagues

It is clear from Scripture that the seal judgment are in chronological order, 1 through 7, and that the seventh seal introduces the 7 trumpet judgments: *"And when he had opened the seventh seal I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. ... And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. "* (Rev 8:1-2, 6) The seal and trumpet judgments are the first two sets of plagues, and "the seven last plagues" are "the vials of the wrath of God." *"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. ... And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven*

angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." (Rev 15:1, 7, 16:1).

The language of Revelation 8 makes it unmistakably obvious that the opening of the seventh seal introduces the seven angels which had the seven trumpets, so the trumpets are subsequent to the seals. Note carefully therefore that since the seventh seal judgment introduces the trumpet judgments the seal judgments cannot be the same as the vial judgments, because the vial judgments are *"the seven last plagues."* The vials are last, so the trumpets cannot follow them.

Three Woes

There are three "woes" introduced by the sounding of the fourth trumpet in Revelation 8:12-13. The first "woe" passes in Revelation 9:12, the second in Revelation 11:14, and the third comes quickly in Revelation 12:12. All three come to pass *after* the middle of the tribulation.

Phrases in chapters 11, 12 and 13 clearly show that the chronology has reached the mid-point of the Tribulation is those chapters: *"... the holy city shall they tread under foot FORTY AND TWO MONTHS. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy A THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND THREESCORE DAYS ..." (Rev 11:2-3)*

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there A THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND THREESCORE DAYS. ... And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for A TIME, AND TIMES, AND HALF A TIME, from the face of the serpent." (Rev 12:6, 14).

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue FORTY AND TWO MONTHS." (Rev 13:5).

The above verses show the time periods of the last half of the tribulation period.

During the first half of the Tribulation the 144,000 and the "two witnesses" are seen on earth (Rev 7:2-8, 11:3-7), but during the last half of the Tribulation they are all seen in heaven (Rev 11:11-12; 14:1-5). They all *"... know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And ... shall instruct many And ... turn many to righteousness ..." (Dan 11:32-33, 12:3).* Their witness is in the first half of the Tribulation, but after the middle of the Tribulation (Rev 11, 12, 13) comes *"... the night ... when no man can work" (John 9:4).* After that time, during the last half of the Tribulation, the Antichrist reigns over the earth. *"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. ... And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." (Rev 13:5, 7).*

The first half of the Tribulation: At the beginning of the seven year Tribulation Temple worship will be reinstituted when the Antichrist confirms the covenant with many for seven years allowing sacrifice and the oblation to God (Dan 9:27). However, *"the court which is without the temple ... is given unto the Gentiles"* and they will desecrate *"the holy city for these first "forty and two months" of the Tribulation (Rev 11:2, 8).* God's "two witnesses" and others will be able to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ during this time. This sacrifice, oblation and witnessing in honor of God Almighty will continue till the middle of the Tribulation.

The last half of the Tribulation: At the mid-point of the seven year Tribulation the Antichrist *"shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease"* (Dan 9:27), kill the two witnesses (Rev 11:7) and will exalt *"himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God"* (2 Thess 2:4). Also at this time Satan and his angels will be cast out of heaven to the earth (Rev 12:7-9) and that old serpent will empower the Antichrist (Rev 13:2, 4), and power will be given to the Antichrist beast to continue forty and two months (Rev 13:5). But saved Israel will be protected and nourished for a thousand two hundred and threescore days or three and a half years (Rev 12:6, 14; Matt 24:15-21).

Signs and Wonders in Heaven

The Greek phrase, "semeion en ouranos" is found three times in Revelation. It is translated, "wonder in heaven" twice (Rev 12:1, 3) and "sign in heaven" once (Rev 15:1): *"And there appeared a great WONDER IN HEAVEN; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars And there appeared another WONDER IN HEAVEN; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads."* (Rev 12:1, 3).

"And I saw another SIGN IN HEAVEN, great and marvellous, seven angels having THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." (Rev 15:1).

Note that John said in Revelation 15:1, *"I saw ANOTHER sign in heaven"* meaning that he must have seen signs in heaven before this one (i.e. the woman clothed with the sun and the great red dragon). "Another" here has to do with order of sequence. Therefore, it is speaking of an event after the middle of the Tribulation. This is clear from the next verse where it speaks of *"them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name"* (Rev 15:2), because the Antichrist's image, mark, and number were not instituted until the mid-point of the Tribulation (Rev 13:14-17).

Furthermore, John also *"looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. ... And they sung as it were a new song before the throne ... and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."* (Rev 14:1, 3). If the vial judgments of Revelation 15 and 16 are merely a replay of the seal judgments of Revelation 6 then how is it that the 144,000 were on earth in Revelation 7 just after the opening of the sixth seal, but here in Revelation 14 they are in heaven just prior to the pouring out of the vials? The fact of the matter is that the vials are not a repeat of the seals, but are in fact subsequent to them.

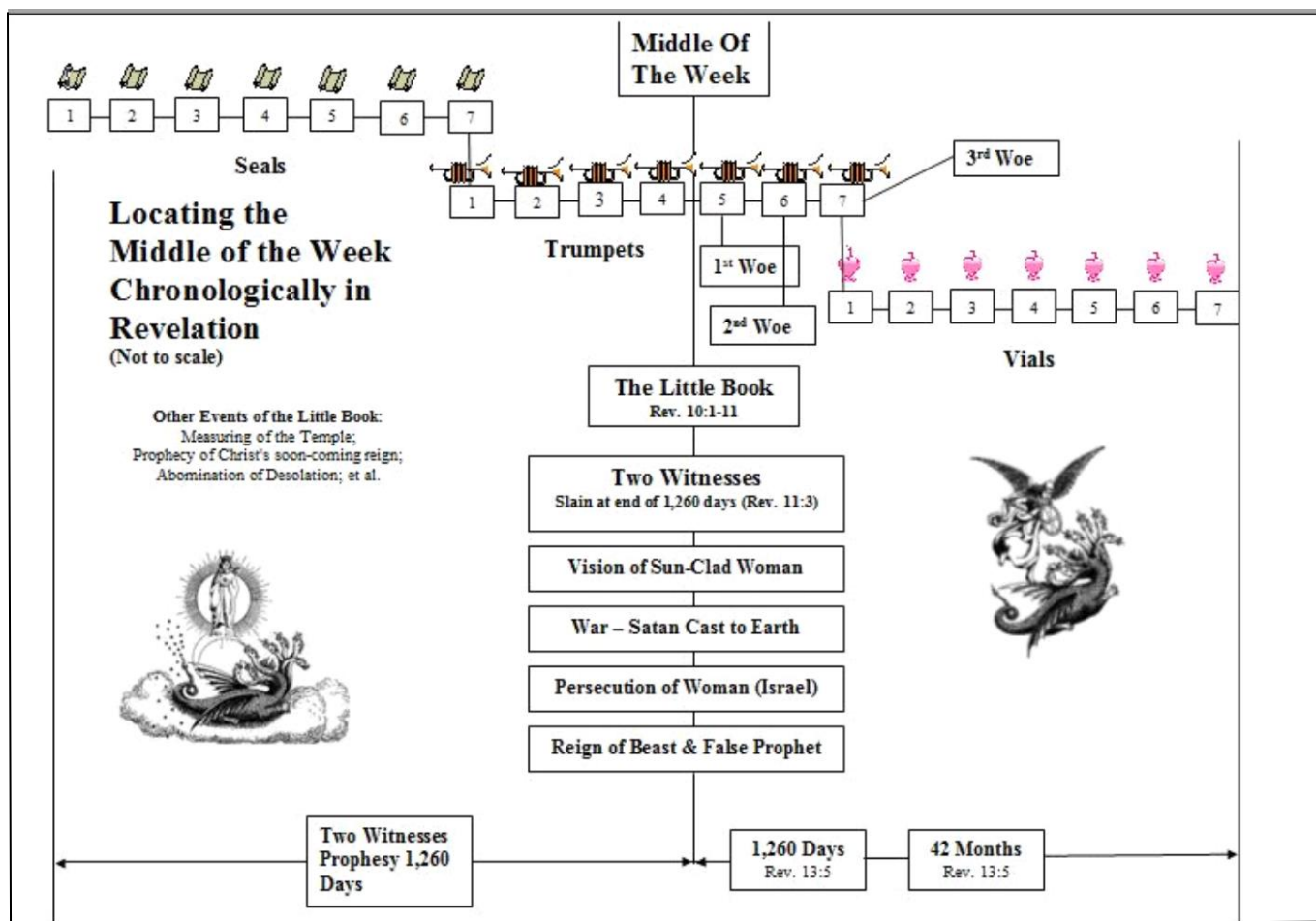
CONCLUSION

It is, therefore, apparent that the Book of Revelation is a chronological record of the events of *"... the things which thou [John] hast seen [Chapter 1], and the things which are [the Church Age - Chapters 2 & 3], and the things which shall be hereafter [after the Rapture - Chapters 4-22]"* (Rev 1:19)

So here is the order of the Book of Revelation:

1. This present Church Age (Chapters 2 & 3).
2. The Rapture and the scene in heaven just prior to the beginning of the Tribulation (Chapters 4 & 5).
3. The beginning of the Tribulation with the opening of the first 6 seals (Chapter 6). One quarter of the Earth's population is wiped out by this time (Rev 6:8).
4. A parenthetical portion detailing the sealing of 144,000 Israelite soul winners who win multitudes to Christ.
5. The chronological opening of the 7th seal which initiates the 7 trumpet judgments, and the sounding of the first 4 trumpets (Chapter 8).
6. The sounding of the 5th and 6th trumpets, the 5th of which completes the first of three woes (Chapter 9). Up to this point a full 1/2 of Earth's population has been wiped out (Rev 6:8, 9:15).
7. Then there are five parenthetical chapters concerning,
 - 1) a mighty angel with a little book (Chapter 10).
 - 2) God's two witnesses and the passing of the second "woe" (Chapter 11).
 - 3) Satan's being cast out of Heaven and his attempts to destroy Israel (Chapter 12).
 - 4) the Antichrist, his False Prophet and the Image of the beast (Chapter 13).
 - 5) the revealing of the 144,000 in Heaven, angels flying in heaven preaching the everlasting gospel to them that dwell on the earth and prophesying doom to the lost, and the reaping of the lost and the treading of the winepress of the wrath of God (Chapter 14).
8. After the 5 parenthetical chapters comes the seven last plagues of the wrath of God (Chapters 15 & 16).
9. Then there are two more parenthetical chapters that describe the fall of Religious Babylon (Chapter 17), and Economic Babylon (Chapter 18).
10. After these things there is great joy in Heaven in anticipation of the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the Lord returns to destroy all the lost that remain on Earth, and He cast the Beast and his the false prophet alive into a lake of fire, then He casts Satan into the bottomless pit, and raises all the Old Testament & Tribulation saints to attend the marriage supper, and reigns on earth for 1,000 years, and when the 1,000 years are ended those who were born during that time who did not receive Christ will rebel when He releases Satan for a little season to test them, and then He will raise and judge all the lost of all ages and cast them into the lake of fire (Chapters 19 & 20).
11. The description of Heaven and eternity future and final warnings (Chapters 21 & 22).

It is manifestly evident that those who teach that the seals, trumpets and vials of the Book of Revelation are anything but basically chronological do err in their understanding.



APPENDIX A

The Things That Will Be Hereafter

The following charts are designed to be printed and placed side-by-side as one continuous sheet, but they can also easily be read on your computer.

Note: This is the pretrib rapture of living overcomers only.



The Vision of Jesus
and the
Seven Churches

Selected Promises to the Overcomers:

Eat of the tree of life

Receive the Crown of life

Shall not be hurt of the second death

Eat of the hidden manna

White stone with a new name written

Power over the nations, to rule them with a
rod of iron

Give him the morning star

Clothed in white raiment

Will not blot his name out of book of life,
but will confess his name before my Father

Make him a pillar in the temple of my God

Grant to sit with me in my throne

Keep thee from the hour of temptation

Note: This is Not the rapture
described in 1Thes 4:14-17.

This is the rapture of Mat. 24:40

"one shall be taken, and the other left"



**Firstfruits
Rapture**

Of the Living:

"the last" Matt. 20:8

*So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, **beginning from the last unto the first.*** Matt. 20:8

"the one shall be taken" Mat. 24:40

5 wise virgins - *"they that were ready"*
Mat 25:10

24 Elders who are representative of the
chosen and faithful Church-age saints.
Rev 4:4-11

Sing the song, *"thou hast redeemed **us**
unto God by thy blood....and hast made
us kings and priests, and **we** shall reign
on earth"* Rev 5:9-10

The **overcomers** out of the New
Testament saints alive at the time of the
rapture.

"and the other left"

(The living **non-overcomers** are Left
Behind. 5 foolish virgins)

Faithful and wise servant Mat 24:47

*Watch ye therefore, and pray always,
that ye may be **accounted worthy to
escape all these things that shall come
to pass**, and to stand before the Son of
Man (at the Judgment Seat). Luke
21:36*

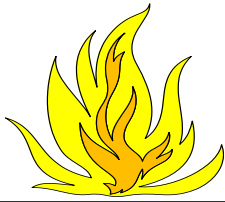
Of the Dead in Christ:

None of the dead in Christ are taken at
this time (they are taken in the Mid-
Trib, Pre-Wrath Rapture – *"The time of
the dead, that they should be judged"*
does not happen until Rev 11:18)

Narrow Way →

The Salvation of the Soul

Gold, Silver, Precious Stones 1Cor 3:12



**Judgment
Seat
of Christ**

Church of the Firstborn
Rom 8:29; Heb 12:23

Inheritance

Firstborn Sons
Rom 8:14

**Bride of
Christ**



**Kingdom
of Heaven**

Spiritual Body

Overcomers

*Well done, good and faithful
servant*

First Resurrection

Rev 2:7

*To him that overcometh will I
give to eat of the Tree of Life.*

Rev 2:11

*He that overcometh shall not be
hurt of the second death.*

Rev 20:6

*Blessed and holy is he that hath
part in the first resurrection; on
such the second death hath no
power; but they shall be priests
and kings of God and of Christ,
and shall reign with him one
thousand years.*

Phil 3:11

*If by any means I might attain
unto the (out) resurrection of the
dead.*

The "Out Resurrection" from
among those raised from the
dead.

This is the "prize of the high
calling of God in Christ Jesus" of
Phil 3:14

*Luke 13:24 Strive to enter in at
the strait gate; for many, I say
unto you, will seek to enter in,
and shall not be able.*

Matt 22:14

*Many are called, but **few are
chosen.***

*1Peter 1:9 Receiving the end of
your faith, even the **salvation of
your souls.***



Ruler over all his goods
Mat 24:47 **100 Fold**

24 Elders Rev 4:4

Luke 20:35

*But they which shall be accounted worthy to
obtain that world, and the **resurrection from
the dead**, neither marry, nor are given in
marriage:*

Luke 20:36

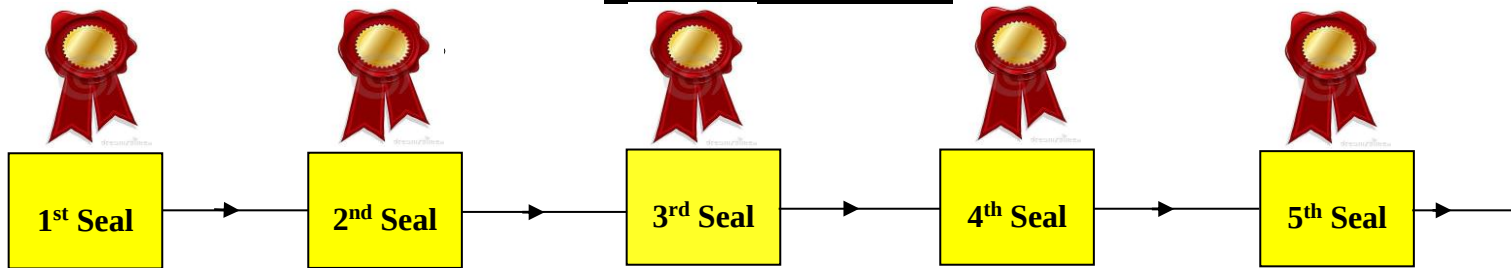
***Neither can they die any more:** for they are
equal unto the angels; and are the children of
God, being the children of the resurrection.*

Rom 8:13

*....but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the
deeds of the body, ye shall live"*

THE THINGS WHICH SHALL BE HEREAFTER

SEVEN SEALS



Elijah the Prophet

Rev 6:2
White Horse

Rider comes in the spirit and power of "Elijah the Prophet".

He comes in God's name with mighty power.

Mal 4:5-6
Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:
And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

He comes first to slay the false prophets in the church.

1 Peter 4:17
For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Mat 13:30
Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

War

Rev 6:3-4
Red Horse

Rider has power to take peace from the earth; given a great sword.

Mat 24:6
And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars:

Rev 11:3-14
Two Witnesses appear 1260 days prior to end of the 2nd Woe (vs. 14).

Revelation 11:3
3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Famine

Rev 6:5-6
Black Horse

Rider has a pair of balances in his hand (to measure out precious food. A loaf of bread costs one day's wages.)

Pestilence

Rev 6:7-8
Pale Horse

Death is the rider, and Hades follows him.

Seals 2-4 combined
kill 1/4 of all people on earth.

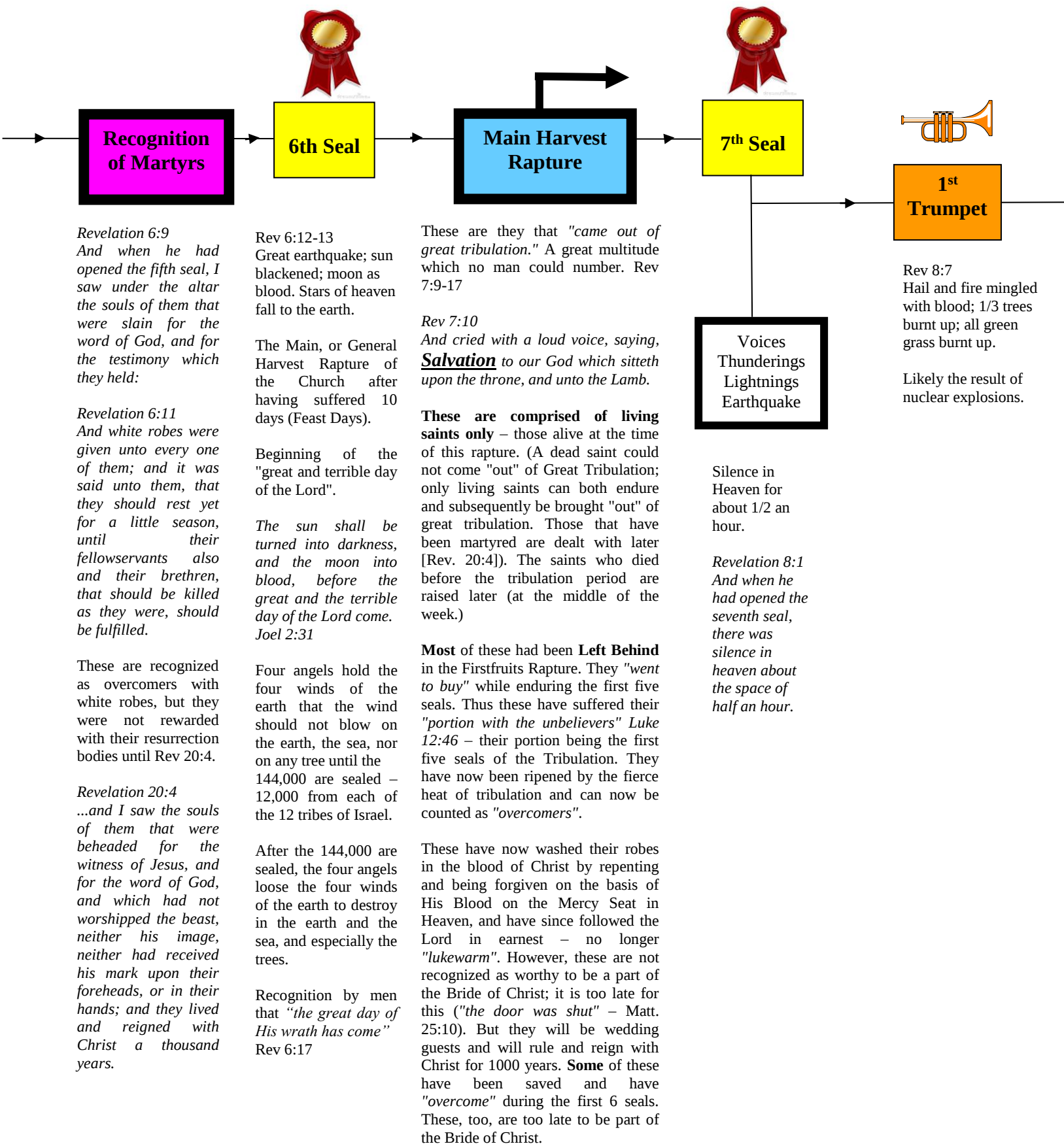
Luke 21:10-11
10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: (war)
11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

Rev 6:9-11

Multitude of Christians have been martyred; their souls are seen under the Golden Altar in Heaven.

Mat 24:9
Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake,





SEVEN TRUMPETS



2nd Trumpet

Rev 8:8-9
Mountainous meteor strikes the sea; 1/3 sea creatures die; 1/3 ships destroyed.

Which ocean is not known.



3rd Trumpet

Rev 8:10-11
Great "star from heaven" named Wormwood falls to earth;

1/3 fresh water poisoned; many men die.

The "star from heaven" is likely a demon - see Rev 9:1 where the "star from heaven" is identified as a demon.



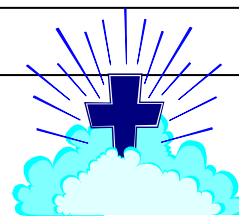
4th Trumpet

Rev 8:12
1/3 sun smitten
1/3 moon smitten
1/3 stars darkened
Day does not shine for 1/3 part.

Results in very cold temperatures on earth.

An angel flies through heaven pronouncing the 3 woes to come in the next 3 trumpets.

Middle of the Week



Midtrib Rapture

**Two
Witnesses**

**144,000
Rapture**

Rev 10:1-11
Vision of the little
book

Rev 12:1-17
Vision of sun-clad
woman

Rev 11:1-2
Measuring of the
Temple

Mat 24:15 2Th 2:4
Rev 13:15
Abomination of
Desolation

Rev 11:15-19
Prophecy of
Christ's future reign

Rev 13:11-18
The False Prophet and
the mark of the beast

Rev 12:7-9
War in heaven.
Michael and his angels
defeat Satan and his
angels and cast them out
into the earth

Rev 17:1-18
Ecclesiastical Babylon, the
mother of false religion,
destroyed

Mat 24:16-22
*Jews flee into the
wilderness; massive
persecution of the Jews
begins. 2/3 of the Jews alive
at this point will ultimately
be slain (Zec 13:8)*

The two witnesses
are slain after
having prophesied
1260 days.

They are raised from
the dead 3 1/2 days
later. Rev 11:12-14

The second woe is
past – Rev 11:14

Rev 14:4
These were redeemed
from among men,
being the firstfruits
unto God and to the
Lamb.

144,000 Born-again
Jewish evangelists
who were sealed at
the 6th Seal.

**Firstfruits to God
and the Lamb**
from the Nation of
Israel.

That these are in
heaven is confirmed
by the following:

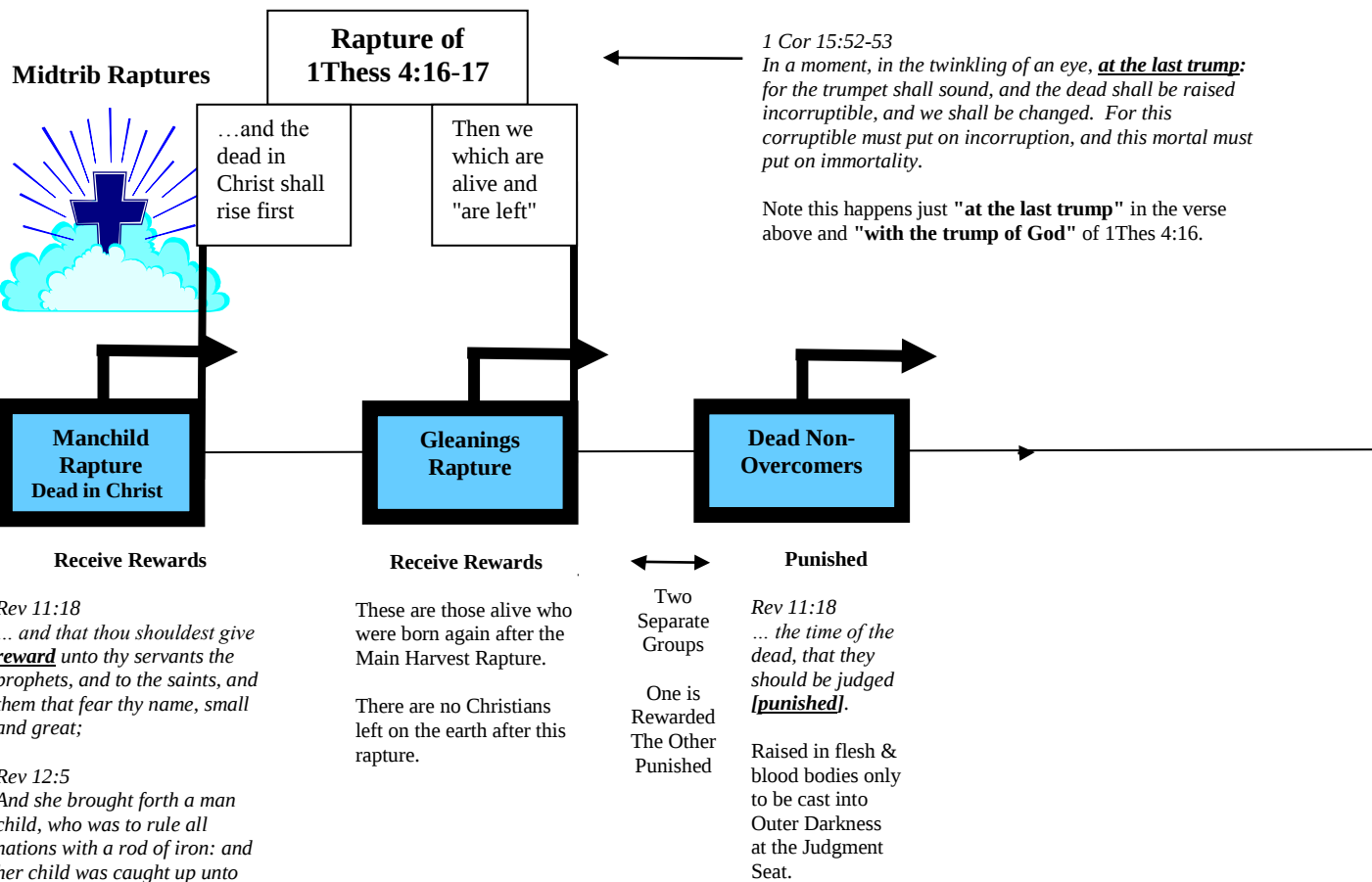
Rev 14:3
*And they sung as it
were a new song
before the throne,
and before the four
beasts, and the
elders:*

War in Heaven



Vision of the Sun-clad Woman

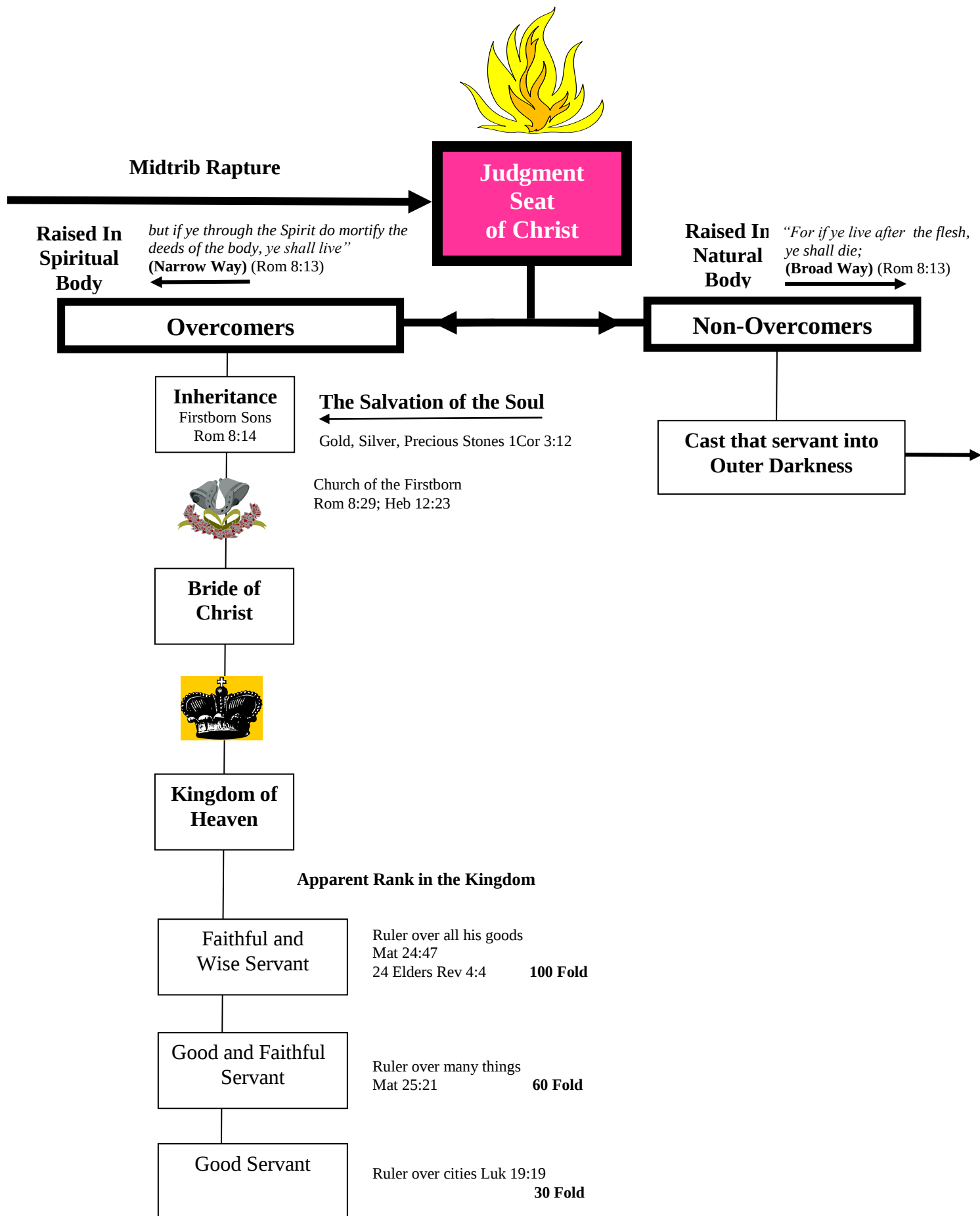




Note on above raptures: 1Th 4:16-17 says the "dead in Christ" shall rise first. 1Cor 15:23 says: "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Paul defined "**they that are Christ's**" here in Gal 5:24: And **they that are Christ's** have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. The non-overcomers had never "crucified the flesh". They chose to "save their lives here"; now they must "lose their lives there" (Luke 17:33). These are the ones of whom Jesus said in Luke 13:27: ... I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. These failed to enter in at the straight gate (Luke 13:24). These will rise from the dead in their flesh and blood bodies, only to be rejected at the JSOC and cast into outer darkness for 1,000 years. These are the "slothful servants" of Mat 25:30. These are those of whom Rev 20:5 says: But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Two escapes of those **alive** at this point are accomplished here: (1) A physical escape **on** earth -1/3 of the Jews alive at this point obey Jesus' command (Mat 24:16-22) and flee into the wilderness. (2) A physical escape **from** the earth - Christians who are alive and remain. And all **dead** saints are raptured at this point (...the dead in Christ shall rise first) (see note above). After both escapes are accomplished, the earth is now emptied of all who belonged to the Church. However, now the angels take over the job of proclaiming the gospel: Rev 14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Some are born-again under this preaching; **however, they are saved Gentiles and deemed "Post-Church"**. So now the enraged Dragon concentrates on both groups: "The dragon made war with THE REMNANTS of her seed", and there are two of these remnants - (1) "which keep the commandments of God", and (2) "which hold the testimony of Jesus." 'Keepers of 'the commandments of God', the Law, are a definition of Israel; they who hold - that is, those in whose keeping is - 'the testimony of Jesus' is a description impossible of any but a believer; it has been a definition of believers for nineteen centuries; it is the only name given to Christians throughout the eighteen prophetic chapters of the Apocalypse, and describes even the Apostle John himself (Rev. 1:9). Two-thirds of the Jews in Palestine are slaughtered; and the Christian martyrs under Antichrist are so numerous that they form a class by themselves (Rev. 20:4) on the opening of the Kingdom.

There remains one final rapture of living **Post-Church** believers who were saved after the above Mid-Trib raptures. (Rev 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.)



Suffer Loss
wood, hay, stubble
(Disinherited Sons)

1Cor 3:15 *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as fire.*

Castaway
1Cor 9:27

Second Death for Non-Overcoming Believers

Body and Soul Cast Into Gehenna

Unprofitable
Servant

This servant did not attain Salvation of the Soul. Saved his life on earth; lost his life at the Judgment Seat.

Luke 9:24-25
For whosoever will save his life (soul) shall lose it.

For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

To "lose his life" in the next age means to suffer the hurt of the second death for 1000 years. All believers who do not receive their glorified bodies in the First Resurrection are put to death the "second time" at the JSOC: they will literally "lose" their lives.

Hurt of the second death
Rev 2:11

Rom 8:13
For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;

Rev 3:5 *He that overcometh... I will not blot his name out of the book of life...*

Conversely, he that does not overcome, the same shall be blotted out of the book of life.

The Book of Life is where are written all the names of those who will rule and reign with Christ in the millennium (Church of the Firstborn whose names are written in heaven - Heb 12:23). This book pertains to the Salvation of the Soul. Every believer's name is written in this book because he is an heir of God; but if he is disinherited from being a joint-heir with Christ at the JSOC (Rom 8:17), his name will be blotted out.

Mat 10:28 *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Gehenna)*

Mat 5:29 *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (Gehenna)*

Heb 10 26-27 *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire, which shall devour the adversaries.*

But he himself shall (future) be saved, yet so as by fire. 1Cor 3:15

(His soul [himself] shall be saved, but [yet] it will be at the end of 1,000 years, and through the agency of the refining discipline of this fire in Gehenna)

Mat 25:30
And cast ye that unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

These at least have an initial glimpse of the Kingdom, but they have no part in the millennial reign. Thus it is written, "when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac (etc.) in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (cast into outer darkness).

These are weeping and gnashing their teeth because, too late, they realize they wasted their lives on earth. They, like Esau, traded their inheritance for one morsel of meat - i.e., the trinkets the world has to offer - and are suffering loss in the Kingdom. Still saved, yet "so as by fire" - the fire of Gehenna. These will receive their glorified bodies at the end of the millennial reign after they have met the requirement of having lost their lives (souls). Because these refused to lose their lives on earth, they must lose their lives during this period of 1000 years in order that their souls may be saved at the time of the 2nd Resurrection.

Mat 5:26 *Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

Mat 7:22 *And many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

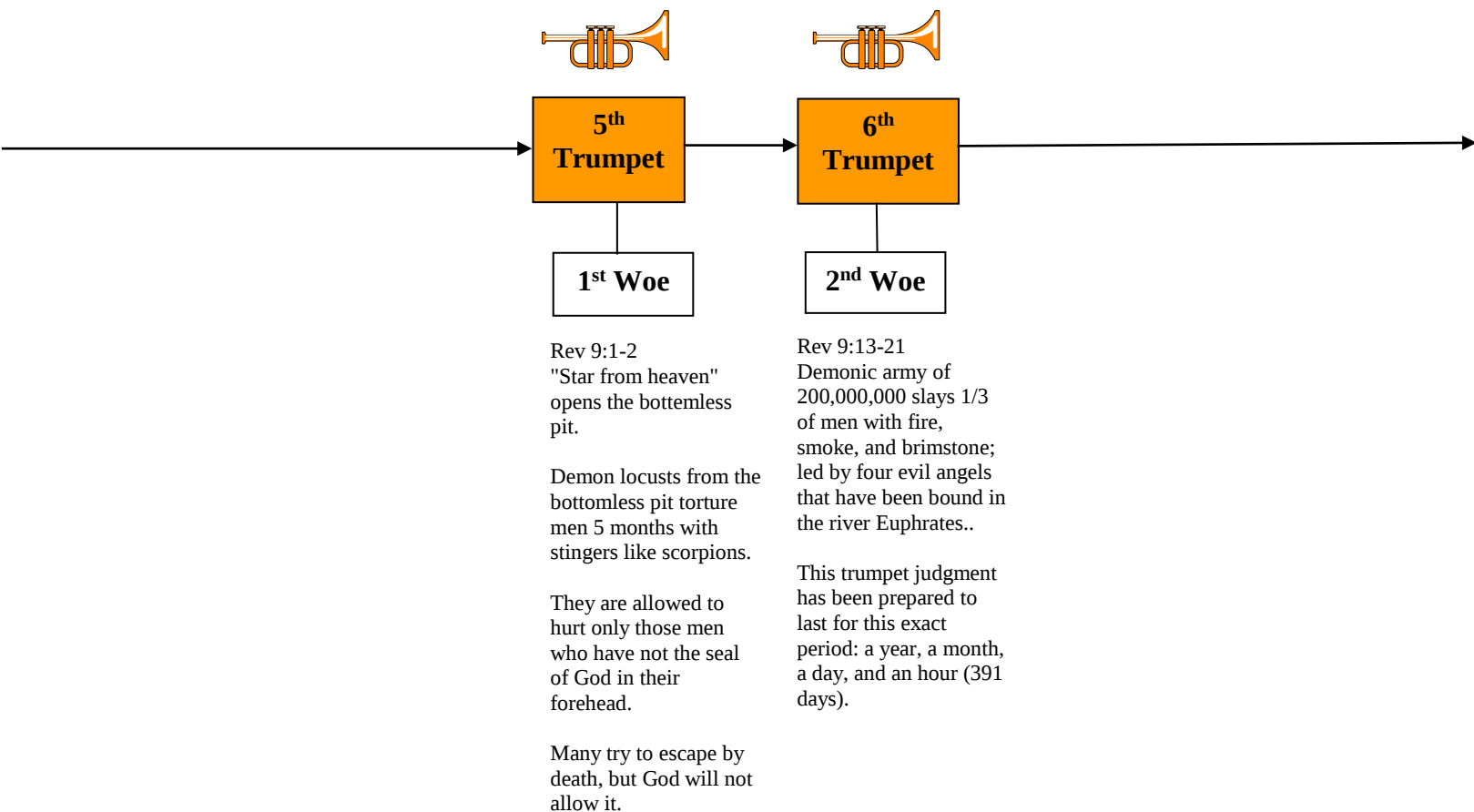
The Place of Departed Souls – Called Sheol (OT) or Hades (NT)

Paradise – Abraham's Bosom

Great
Gulf
Fixed

Gehenna

The Underworld is shown in greater detail in Appendix B



Demonic Stinging Locusts



Demonic Army of 200,000,000

SEVEN GOLDEN BOWLS



Pre-Wrath Rapture

These are "post-Church era" believers who were born-again after the final rapture of the Church at mid-tribulation and have survived alive until this point.

These are subsequently seen in heaven:
Rev 15:2-3

And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses.....

There are no born-again believers (Church age or Post-Church Age) left on earth after this point:
Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? Luke 18:8

The answer is NO!

Rev 14:15
...for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Two
Separate
Events

Rev 14:19
And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

3rd Woe
The full
wrath of God

Rev 11:19
Voices
Thunderings
Lightnings
Earthquake



**1st
Bowl**

Rev 16:2
Boils on those who have the mark of the beast



**2nd
Bowl**

Rev 16:3
Sea becomes as blood. All sea creatures die

Note

Almost the full 42 months have now passed at this point.

Revelation 13:5
...and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

The Seven Vial Judgments occur in the last 40 days of Daniel's 70th week.

The pattern was set when Moses brought the ten plagues on Egypt in only 19 days.



3rd Bowl

Rev 16:4
All fresh water
becomes blood



4th Bowl

Rev 16:8-9
Sun scorches men
with great heat



5th Bowl

Rev 16:10-11
Kingdom of beast
full of darkness



6th Bowl

Rev 16:12-16
Euphrates River dried
up. Three unclean
spirits gather armies to
battle at Armageddon.



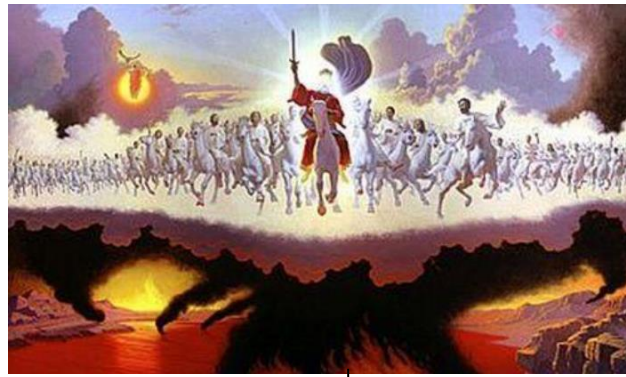
7th Bowl

Greatest Earthquake of
all time; great city split in
3 parts

*Rev. 16:18
And there were voices,
and thunders, and
lightnings; and there was
a great earthquake, such
as was not since men
were upon the earth, so
mighty an earthquake,
and so great.*

Great hailstones of over
100 pounds each

Sign of the
Son of Man
in the
Heavens



Jews Mourn
30 Days

Glorious
Appearing

Mat 24:28-31
Sun blackened; moon dark; stars fall (“*immediately after the tribulation of those days*”). Only light in the heavens comes from the Shekinah glory of the Sign of the Son of Man.

Mat 24:30
And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Zec 12:10-13:1
And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son....

Amos 8:9-10
*And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:10 **And I will turn your feasts into mourning,** and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.*

All remaining dead Jews (those not resurrected in Rev. 11:18 – see chart on Middle of the Week) are resurrected into flesh and blood bodies to mourn with those still living at the time.

Eze 37:12-14
*Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, **I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.** 13 And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, 14 **And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land:** then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.*

Battle of
Armageddon

Supper of the
Great God

End of 1,290
Days



And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; Rev 19:17



Rapture of Martyrs

Day of Atonement

Final Fulfillment

Temple Cleansed

Feast of Tabernacles

Final Fulfillment

Judgment of Living Gentiles

Revelation 20:4

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Feast of Trumpets

Final Fulfillment

Separation of Sheep and Goats

Judgment based entirely on works – How each unsaved person treated the Jews and Christians during the Tribulation.

Sheep Mat 25:34 The Blessed



Flesh and blood Gentiles enter the Kingdom on earth. Most of these will later be born again by the preaching of restored and re-commissioned Israel.

I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curseth you (Gen 12:3)

It is obvious neither the sheep nor the goats knew the Lord. They both asked exactly the same questions in total bewilderment.

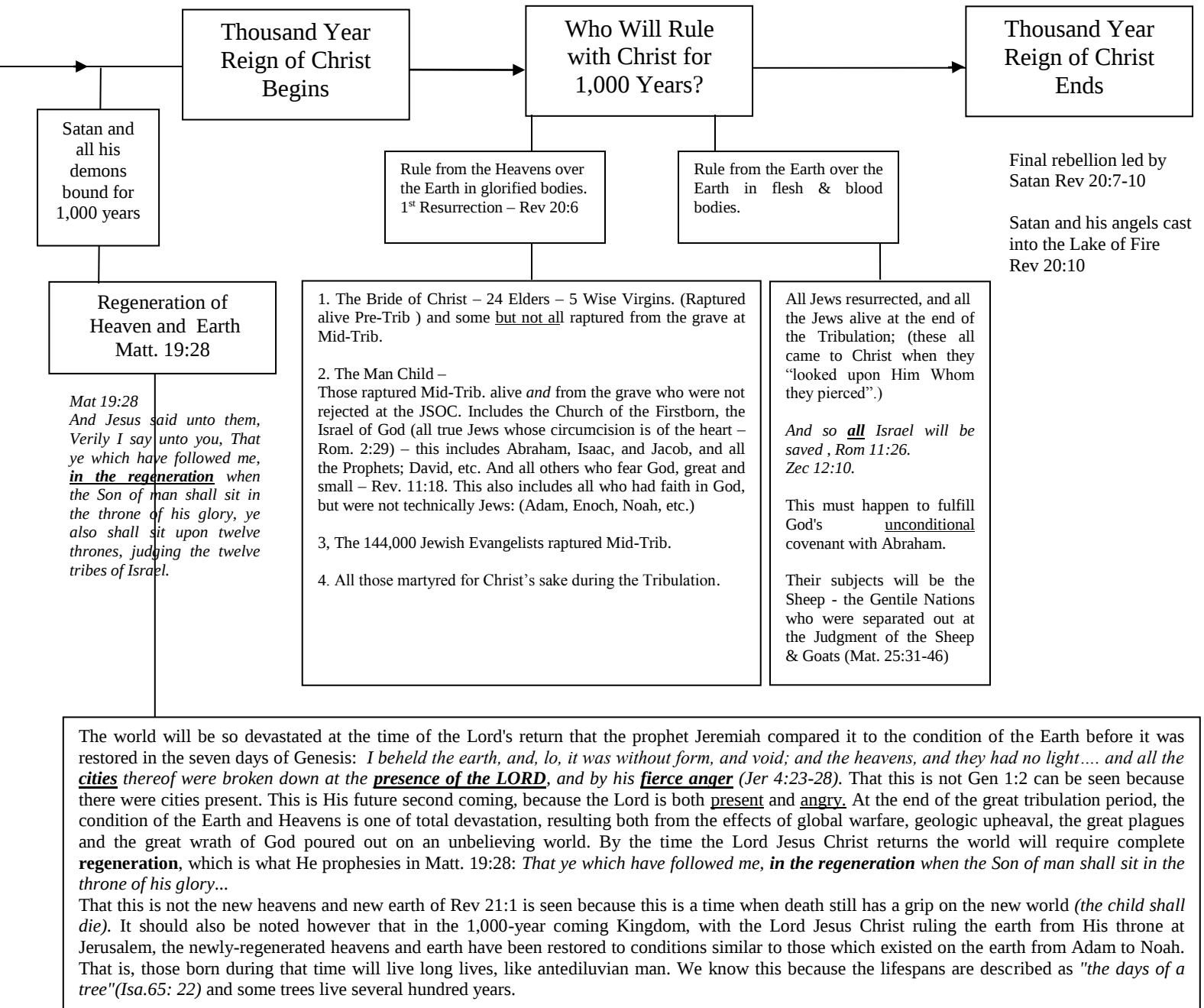
Goats Mat 25:41 The Cursed

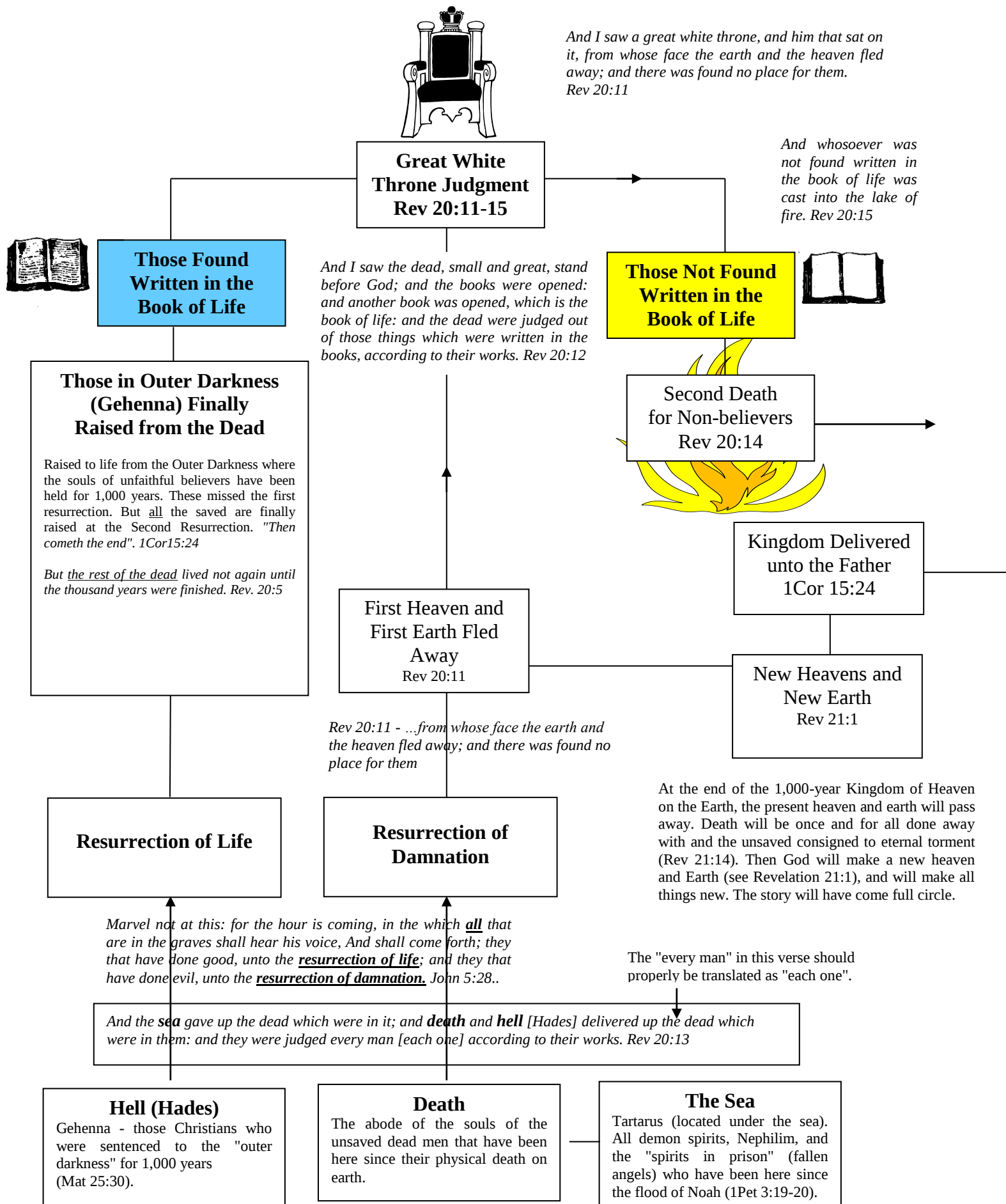


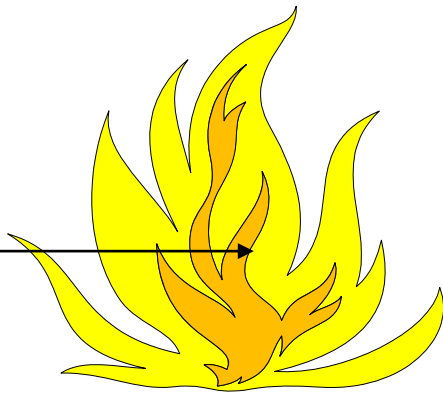
Sent into everlasting punishment.

Kingdom of Heaven

1,000 Year Reign of Jesus Christ







Lake of Fire

Eternity

New Jerusalem

1,500 miles each direction

Rev. 21:10-11

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal



APPENDIX B

Detail of Hades

But he himself shall (future) be saved, yet so as by fire. 1Cor 3:15

(His soul [himself] shall be saved, but [yet] it will be at the end of 1,000 years, and through the agency of the refining discipline of this fire in the Outer D arkness)

Sheol (OT)

The Place of Departed Souls

Hades (NT)

Paradise - Abraham's Bosom

The souls of all the Old Testament and New Testament righteous from Abel to the present. **Only Jesus Christ has ever left this place permanently.** Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, King David, Samuel, and the poor beggar named Lazarus are among those still here awaiting the First Resurrection. The souls of *all* New Testament Saints who have died in Christ are *still* here.

There is a presence of Christ here so comforting as to surpass anything known on earth.

Great
Gulf
Fixed

Gehenna

This is a prison house for God's covenant people who were disobedient in this life.

It presently contains the souls of all unsaved Jews under the Abrahamic Covenant. Includes unsaved Pharisees, Scribes, and other Jews whose circumcision is that of the flesh, and not of the heart (Rom 2:28-29).

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell (Gehenna)? Mat 23:33. It is a place of torment and fire, but punishment is graded (Luke 12:47-48) - for some, it may only be confinement (as in "go to your room".)

These Jews will all be resurrected at the end of the Millennial Reign in flesh and blood bodies according to Eze 37:12-14, thus fulfilling the promise that all Israel shall be saved (Rom 11:26).

Jesus also referred to this place as the "Outer Darkness". It will be a place of disciplinary punishment where those will be sent who are cast away at the JSOC. There is much weeping and gnashing of teeth at that time. It is temporary, lasting 1,000 years. At the end of the millennial reign, these will rise in the Resurrection of Life (John 5:29). These literally "shall be saved", but this Salvation (of the Soul) will be accomplished through the agency of this fiery discipline. That there is finally escape from this place can also be seen in Mat 5:26-*Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

Both Hades (Hell) and Death are literal places – prisons, if you will.

*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of **hell and of death.*** Rev 1:18.

At the end of the 1,000 years, the occupants of each will be delivered up to the Great White Throne Judgment.

*And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and **death and hell** delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.* Rev. 20:13

The "sea" contains the souls of the Nephilim who died in the flood and are known as demons.

After the Great White Throne Judgment, both of these literal prisons - Death and Hades - then empty and no longer needed - will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

"Death" – Abode of the Unsaved Dead

All those who die lost outside of God's Covenant are sent here; these are eternally damned with no hope of redemption. They await the Great White Throne Judgment, after which they will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

*That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God** in the world: Eph. 2:12*
*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but **he that believeth not is condemned already**, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:18*

Tartarus

The "bottomless pit" where certain fallen angels are presently imprisoned (2Pe 2:4) along with certain demons (Luke 8:31, Rev 9:1-2) and Nephilim. They are presided over by the "Angel of the Abyss" (Rev 9:11).

APPENDIX C

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